POEMS OF Adam LINDSAY GORDON

CIN #25--

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

Iseult

SEA SPRAY & SMOKE DRIFT
BUSH BALLADS AND RHYMES
By ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

THE POEMS OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

T. N. FOULIS
LONDON & EDINBURGH
1912

PRINTED BY NEILL AND CO., LTD., EDINBURGH.

THE TITLES OF THE POEMS

SEA SPRAY & SMOKE DRIFT

PAGE

Podas Okus 1

Gone 9

Unshriven 13

YE WEARIE WAYFARER, HIS BALLAD.—IN EIGHT FYTTES:

Fytte I. By Wood and Wold. A Preamble . 16

„ II. By Flood and Field. A Legend of the Cottiswold 17

„ III. Zu der edlen Yagd. A Treatise on Trees 21

„ IV. In Utrumque Paratus. A Logical Discussion 24

„ V. Lex Talionis. A Moral Discourse . . 29

„ VI. Potters' Clay. An Allegorical Interlude 33

„ VII. Cito Pede Preterit Ætas. A Philosophical Dissertation 34

„ VIII. Finis Exoptatus. A Metaphysical Song 40

Borrow'd Plumes. A Preface and a Piracy . . . 49

Pastor Cum. Translation from Horace 51

A Legend of Madrid. Translated from the Spanish . 53

Fauconshawe. A Ballad 60

Rippling Water 69

Cui Bono 73

Bellona 76

The Song of the Surf 80

Whisperings in Wattle-Boughs 83

Confiteor 86

Sunlight on the Sea. The Philosophy of a Feast . . 91

Delilah. From a Picture 96

From Lightning and Tempest 99

Wormwood and Nightshade 101

Ars Longa. A Song of Pilgrimage 107

The Last Leap 111

Quare Fatigasti 114

HIPPODROMANIA; OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE.—IN FIVE PARTS:

Part I. Visions in the Smoke 117

„ II. The Fields of Coleraine 125

THE TITLES OF THE POEMS

HIPPODROMANIA—*continued.* PAGE

Part III. Crædat Judæus Apella 128
„ IV. Banker's Dream 132
„ V. Ex Fumo Dare Lucem. 'Twixt the Cup and the Lip 139

The Roll of the Kettledrum: or, the Lay of the Last Charger 150

BUSH BALLADS & GALLOPING RHYMES

A Dedication 167
The Sick Stockrider 172
The Swimmer 179
From the Wreck 185
No Name 194
Wolf and Hound 197
De Te 202
How we beat the Favourite. A Lay of the Loamshire Hunt Cup 207
Fragmentary Scenes from the Road to Avernus:
SCENE I. Discontent 216
„ VII. Two Exhortations 218
„ IX. In the Garden 224
„ X. After the Quarrel 227
„ XI. Ten Paces Off 228
LAST SCENE. "Exeunt" 230
Doubtful Dreams 232
The Rhyme of Joyous Guard 239
Thora's Song. "Ashtaroth" 253
The Three Friends. From the French 255
A Song of Autumn 260
The Romance of Britomarte 261
Laudamus 277

THE LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Reproduced from paintings by

CAPTAIN G. D. GILES

How we Beat the Favourite . . . . *frontispiece*

Iseult.

Unshriven . . . . . *page* 8

Empty saddle on his back, broken bridle hanging slack,
The steed returned full gallop to the stall.

By Blood and Field 24

And one who rode on a dark brown steed,
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,
And the resolute eye that loved the lead,
And the quarters massive and square—
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).

Finis Exoptatus 40

Once at Ephesus.

In Utrumque Paratus 56

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse.

Banker's Dream 136

"Banker wins," "Banker's beat," "Cadger wins,"
"A dead heat."

The Sick Stockrider 168

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run
of hoofs;
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

From the Wreck 184

And faster and faster across the wide heath
We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,
And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—
She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him, and led.

THE LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Wolf and Hound . . . . . *page* 200

Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,
As I turned and fronted the rocks.

How we Beat the Favourite 216

She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit.

The Rhyme of Joyous Guard 248

With her through the Lyonesse I rode,
Till the woods with the noontide fervour glow'd,
And there for a space we halted,
Where the intertwining branches made
Cool carpets of olive tinted shade,
And the floors with fretwork of flame inlaid
From leafy lattices vaulted.

The Romance of Britomarte 264

But she clear'd by inches the oaken boards,
And she carried me yards beyond the dyke.

PODAS OKUS

Am I waking? Was I sleeping?
Dearest, are you watching yet?
Traces on your cheeks of weeping
Glitter, 'tis in vain you fret;
Drifting ever! drifting onward!
In the glass the bright sand runs
Steadily and slowly downward;
Hush'd are all the Myrmidons.

Has Automedon been banish'd
From his post beside my bed?
Where has Agamemnon vanished?
Where is warlike Diomed?
Where is Nestor? where Ulysses?
Menelaus, where is he?
Call them not, more dear your kisses
Than their prosings are to me.

Daylight fades and night must follow,
Low, where sea and sky combine,
Droops the orb of great Apollo,
Hostile god to me and mine.

Through the tent's wide entrance streaming,
In a flood of glory rare,
Glides the golden sunset, gleaming
On your golden gleaming hair.

Chide him not, the leech who tarries,
Surest aid were all too late;
Surer far the shaft of Paris,
Winged by Phœbus and by fate;
When he crouch'd behind the gable,
Had I once his features scann'd,
Phœbus' self had scarce been able
To have nerved his trembling hand.

Blue-eyed maiden! dear Athena!
Goddess chaste, and wise, and brave,
From the snares of Polyxena
Thou would'st fain thy favourite save.
Tell me, is it not far better
That it should be as it is?
Jove's behests we cannot fetter,
Fate's decrees are always his.

Many seek for peace and riches,
Length of days and life of ease;

PODAS OKUS

I have sought for one thing, which is
Fairer unto me than these.
Often, too, I've heard the story,
In my boyhood, of the doom
Which the fates assign'd me—Glory,
Coupled with an early tomb.

Swift assault and sudden sally
Underneath the Trojan wall;
Charge, and countercharge, and rally,
War-cry loud, and trumpet call;
Doubtful strain of desp'rate battle,
Cut and thrust and grapple fierce,
Swords that ring on shields that rattle,
Blades that gash and darts that pierce;—

I have done with these for ever;
By the loud resounding sea,
Where the reedy jav'lins quiver,
There is now no place for me.
Day by day our ranks diminish,
We are falling day by day;
But our sons the strife will finish,
Where man tarries, man must slay.

Life, 'tis said, to all men sweet is,
Death to all must bitter be;
Wherefore thus, oh, mother Thetis?
None can baffle Jove's decree;
I am ready, I am willing,
To resign my stormy life;
Weary of this long blood-spilling,
Sated with this ceaseless strife.

Shorter doom I've pictured dimly,
On a bed of crimson sand;
Fighting hard and dying grimly,
Silent lips, and striking hand;
But the toughest lives are brittle,
And the bravest and the best
Lightly fall—it matters little;
Now, I only long for rest.

I have seen enough of slaughter,
Seen Scamander's torrent red,
Seen hot blood poured out like water,
Seen the champaign heap'd with dead.
Men will call me unrelenting,
Pitiless, vindictive, stern;
Few will raise a voice dissenting,
Few will better things discern.

PODAS OKUS

Speak! the fires of life are reeling,
  Like the wildfires on the marsh.
Was I to a friend unfeeling?
  Was I to a mistress harsh?
Was there nought save bloodshed throbbing
  In this heart and on this brow?
Whisper! girl, in silence sobbing!
  Dead Patroclus! answer thou!

Dry those violet orbs that glisten,
  Darling, I have had my day;
Place your hand in mine and listen,
  Ere the strong soul cleaves its way
Through the death mist hovering o'er me
  As the stout ship cleaves the wave,
To my fathers, gone before me,
  To the gods who love the brave!

Courage, we must part for certain;
  Shades that sink and shades that rise,
Blending in a shroud-like curtain,
  Gather o'er these weary eyes.
O'er the fields we used to roam, in
  Brighter days and lighter cheer,
Gathers thus the quiet gloaming,—
  Now, I ween the end is near.

For the hand that clasps your fingers,
  Closing in the death-grip tight,
Scarcely feels the warmth that lingers,
  Scarcely heeds the pressure light;
While the failing pulse that alters,
  Changing 'neath a death chill damp,
Flickers, flutters, flags, and falters,
  Feebly, like a waning lamp.

Think'st thou, love, 'twill chafe my ghost, in
  Hades' realm, where heroes shine,
Should I hear the shepherd boasting
  To his Argive concubine?
Let him boast, the girlish victor,
  Let him brag; not thus, I trow,
Were the laurels torn from Hector,
  Not so very long ago.

Does my voice sound thick and husky?
  Is my hand no longer warm?
Round that neck where pearls look dusky
  Let me once more wind my arm;
Rest my head upon that shoulder,
  Where it rested oft of yore;
Warm and white, yet seeming colder
  Now than ere it seem'd before.

'Twas the fraud of Priam's daughter,
Not the force of Priam's son,
Slew me—ask not why I sought her,
'Twas my doom—her work is done!
Fairer far than she, and dearer
By a thousand-fold thou art;
Come, my own one, nestle nearer,
Cheating death of half his smart.

Slowly, while your amber tresses
Shower down their golden rain,
Let me drink those last caresses,
Never to be felt again;
Yet th' Elysian halls are spacious,
Somewhere near me, I may keep
Room—who knows?—The gods are
gracious;
Lay me lower—let me sleep!

Lower yet, my senses wander,
And my spirit seems to roll
With the tide of swift Scamander,
Rushing to a viewless goal.
In my ears, like distant washing
Of the surf upon the shore,

Drones a murmur, faintly splashing,
'Tis the splash of Charon's oar.

Lower yet, my own Briseis,
Denser shadows veil the light;
Hush, what is to be, to be is,
Close my eyes and say good-night.
Lightly lay your red lips, kissing,
On this cold mouth, while your thumbs
Lie on these cold eyelids pressing—
Pallas! thus thy soldier comes!

UNSHRIVEN

Empty saddle on his back, broken bridle hanging slack,
The steed returned full gallop to the stall.

GONE

In Collins Street standeth a statue tall,
A statue tall on a pillar of stone,
Telling its story, to great and small,
Of the dust reclaimed from the sand waste lone;
Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,
He lay on the desert a dying man;
Who has gone, my friend, where we all must go.

There are perils by land, and perils by water,
Short, I ween, are the obsequies
Of the landsman lost, but they may be shorter
With the mariner lost in the trackless seas;
And well for him, when the timbers start,
And the stout ship reels and settles below,
Who goes to his doom with as bold a heart
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Man is stubborn his rights to yield,
And redder than dews at eventide

Are the dews of battle, shed on the field,
By a nation's wrath or a despot's pride;
But few who have heard their death-knell roll,
From the cannon's lips where they faced
the foe,
Have fallen as stout and steady of soul,
As that dead man gone where we all
must go.

Traverse yon spacious burial-ground,
Many are sleeping soundly there,
Who pass'd with mourners standing around,
Kindred, and friends, and children fair;
Did he envy such ending? 'twere hard to say;
Had he cause to envy such ending? no;
Can the spirit feel for the senseless clay,
When it once has gone where we all
must go?

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,
The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,
The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
Or the hot, red tongue of the native dog?
That couch was rugged, those sextons rude,
Yet, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know

GONE

That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food
When once they've gone where we all must go.

With the pistol clenched in his failing hand,
With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,
He saw the sun go down on the sand,
And he slept, and never saw it rise;
'Twas well; he toil'd till his task was done,
Constant and calm in his latest throe,
The storm was weathered, the battle was won,
When he went, my friends, where we all must go.

God grant that whenever, soon or late,
Our course is run and our goal is reach'd,
We may meet our fate as steady and straight
As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd;
No tears are needed—our cheeks are dry,
We have none to waste upon living woe;
Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,
Having gone, my friends, where we all must go?

We tarry yet, we are toiling still,
He is gone and he fares the best,
He fought against odds, he struggled up hill,
He has fairly earned his season of rest;
No tears are needed—fill out the wine,
Let the goblets clash, and the grape juice
flow;
Ho! pledge me a death-drink, comrade mine,
To a brave man gone where we all must go.

UNSHRIVEN

Oh! the sun rose on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,
And the steed stood ready harness'd in the hall,
And he left his lady's bower, and he sought the eastern tower,
And he lifted cloak and weapon from the wall.

"We were wed but yester-noon, must we separate so soon,
Must you travel unassoiled and, aye, unshriven,
With the blood stain on your hand, and the red streak on your brand,
And your guilt all unconfess't and unforgiven?"

"Tho' it were but yester-even we were wedded, still unshriven,
Across the moor this morning I must ride;
I must gallop fast and straight, for my errand will not wait;
Fear naught, I shall return at eventide."

"If I fear, it is for thee, thy weal is dear to me,
Yon moor with retribution seemeth rife;
As we've sown so must we reap, and I've started in my sleep
At the voice of the avenger, 'life for life.'"

"My arm is strong, I ween, and my trusty blade is keen,
And the courser that I ride is swift and sure,
And I cannot break my oath, though to leave thee I am loth,
There is one that I must meet upon the moor."

. . . . .

Oh! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,
Down the avenue and through the iron gate,
Spurr'd and belted, so he rode, steel to draw and steel to goad,
And across the moor he gallop'd fast and straight.

. . . . .
. . . . .

Oh! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang full of glee,

UNSHRIVEN

Ere the mists of evening gather'd chill and
grey ;
But the wild bird's merry note on the deaf
ear never smote,
And the sunshine never warm'd the lifeless
clay.

Ere the sun began to droop, or the mist began
to stoop,
The youthful bride lay swooning in the
hall ;
Empty saddle on his back, broken bridle
hanging slack,
The steed returned full gallop to the stall.

Oh! the sun sank in the sea, and the wind
wailed drearilie ;
Let the bells in yonder monastery toll,
For the night wrack nestles dark round the
body stiff and stark,
And unshriven to its Maker flies the soul.

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

HYS BALLAD

IN EIGHT FYTTES

Fytte I

BY WOOD AND WOLD

A PREAMBLE

"Beneath the greenwood bough."—W. Scott.

Lightly the breath of the spring wind blows,
Though laden with faint perfume,
'Tis the fragrance rare that the bushman knows,
The scent of the wattle bloom.
Two-thirds of our journey at least are done,
Old horse! let us take a spell
In the shade from the glare of the noon-day sun,
Thus far we have travell'd well;
Your bridle I'll slip, your saddle ungirth,
And lay them beside this log,
For you'll roll in that track of reddish earth,
And shake like a water-dog.

Upon yonder rise there's a clump of trees—
Their shadows look cool and broad—

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

You can crop the grass as fast as you please
While I stretch my limbs on the sward;
'Tis pleasant, I ween, with a leafy screen
O'er the weary head, to lie
On the mossy carpet of emerald green,
'Neath the vault of the azure sky;
Thus all alone by the wood and wold,
I yield myself once again
To the memories old, that like tales fresh told,
Come flitting across the brain.

Fytte II

BY FLOOD AND FIELD

A LEGEND OF THE COTTISWOLD

"They have saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They have bridled a hundred black."—*Old Ballad.*

"He turned in his saddle, now follow who dare,
I ride for my country, quoth * * *."—LAWRENCE.

I remember the lowering wintry morn,
And the mist on the Cotswold hills,
Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,
Not far from the seven rills.
Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St Clair,
Bob Chapman, and Andrew Kerr,

And big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,
And—black Tom Oliver.
And one who rode on a dark brown steed,
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,
And the quarters massive and square—
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).

I remember how merry a start we got,
When the red fox broke from the gorse,
In a country so deep, with a scent so hot,
That the hound could outpace the horse;
I remember how few in the front rank shew'd,
How endless appeared the tail,
On the brown hill side, where we cross'd the road
And headed towards the vale.
The dark brown steed on the left was there,
On the right was a dappled grey,
And between the pair on a chestnut mare
The duffer who writes this lay.

What business had "this child" there to ride?
But little or none at all;
Yet I held my own for a while in "the pride
That goeth before a fall."
Though rashness can hope for but one result,
We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,
And the maxim holds good, "*Quem perdere vult*
Deus, dementat prius."

The right hand man to the left hand said,
As down in the vale we went,
"Harden your heart like a millstone, Ned,
And set your face as flint:
Solid and tall is the rasping wall
That stretches before us yonder;
You must have it at speed or not at all,
'Twere better to halt than to ponder,
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,
And washes the clay bank under;
Here goes for a pull, 'tis a madman's ride,
And a broken neck if you blunder."

No word in reply his comrade spoke,
Nor waver'd, nor once look'd round,

But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke
As we splash'd through the marshy ground;
I remember the laugh that all the while
On his quiet features play'd :—
So he rode to his death, with that careless smile,
In the van of the "Light Brigade";
So stricken by Russian grape, the cheer
Rang out, while he toppled back,
From the shattered lungs as merry and clear
As it did when it roused the pack.
Let never a tear his memory stain,
Give his ashes never a sigh,
One of many who perished, NOT IN VAIN,
AS A TYPE OF OUR CHIVALRY—

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,
And two to the flanks of the brown,
And still as a statue of old he sat,
And he shot to the front, hands down;
I remember the snort and the stag-like bound
Of the steed six lengths to the fore,
And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,

He turned in his saddle and glanced around;
I remember—but little more,
Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,
A jarring thud on the wall,
A shock and the blank of a nightmare's
dream—
I was down with a stunning fall.

Fytte III

ZU DER EDLEN YAGD

A TREATISE ON TREES—VINE-TREE *v.* SADDLE-TREE

"Now, welcome, welcome, masters mine,
Thrice welcome to the noble chase,
Nor earthly sport, nor sport divine,
Can take such honourable place."—
Ballad of the Wild Huntsman (*free translation*).

I remember some words my father said,
When I was an urchin vain;—
God rest his soul, in his narrow bed
These ten long years he hath lain.
When I think one drop of the blood he bore
This faint heart surely must hold,
It may be my fancy and nothing more,
But the faint heart seemeth bold.

He said, that as from the blood of grape,
Or from juice distilled from the grain,

False vigour, soon to evaporate,
Is lent to nerve and brain;
So the coward will dare on the gallant horse
What he never would dare alone,
Because he exults in a borrowed force,
And a hardihood not his own.

And it may be so, yet this difference lies
'Twixt the vine and the saddle-tree,
The spurious courage that drink supplies
Sets our baser passions free;
But the stimulant which the horseman feels
When he gallops fast and straight,
To his better nature most appeals,
And charity conquers hate.

As the kindly sunshine thaws the snow,
E'en malice and spite will yield,
We could almost welcome our mortal foe
In the saddle by flood and field;
And chivalry dawns in the merry tale
That "Market Harborough" writes,
And the yarns of "Nimrod" and "Martingale"
Seem legends of loyal knights.

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Now tell me for once, old horse of mine,
  Grazing round me loose and free,
Does your ancient equine heart repine
  For a burst in such companie,
Where "the *Powers* that be" in the front rank
      ride,
  To hold your own with the throng,
Or to plunge at "Faugh-a-Ballagh's" side
  In the rapids of Dandenong?

Don't tread on my toes, you're no foolish
      weight,
  So I found to my cost, as under
Your carcase I lay, when you rose too late,
  Yet I blame you not for the blunder.
What! sulky old man, your under lip falls!
  You think I, too, ready to rail am
At your kinship remote to that duffer at walls,
  The talkative roadster of Balaam.

Fytte IV

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

A LOGICAL DISCUSSION

"Then hey for boot and horse, lad!
And round the world away!
Young blood will have its course, lad!
And every dog his day!"—C. Kingsley.

There's a formula which the west country clowns
Once used, ere their blows fell thick,
At the fairs on the Devon and Cornwall downs
In their bouts with the single-stick.
You may read a moral, not far amiss,
If you care to moralise,
In the crossing guard, where the ash-plants kiss,
To the words "God spare our eyes."
No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.

If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills
May transform you into a hopper,
And the football meadow is rife with spills,
If you feel disposed for a cropper;

BY FLOOD AND FIELD

And one who rode on a dark brown steed,
  Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,
And the resolute eye that loved the lead,
  And the quarters massive and square—
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
  (There was Celtic blood in the pair).

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse
  You may chance to reverse the medal
On the sward, with the saddle your loins
      across,
  And your hunter's loins on the saddle;
In the stubbles you'll find it hard to frame
  A remonstrance firm, yet civil,
When oft as "our mutual friend" takes aim,
Long odds may be laid on the rising game,
  And against your gaiters level;
There's danger even where fish are caught
  To those who a wetting fear;
For what's worth having must aye be bought,
And sport's like life and life's like sport,
  "It ain't all skittles and beer."

The honey bag lies close to the sting,
  The rose is fenced by the thorn,
Shall we leave to others their gathering,
And turn from clustering fruits that cling
  To the garden wall in scorn?
Albeit those purple grapes hang high,
  Like the fox in the ancient tale,
Let us pause and try, ere we pass them by,
  Though we, like the fox, may fail.

All hurry is worse than useless; think
On the adage, "'Tis pace that kills";
Shun bad tobacco, avoid strong drink,
Abstain from Holloway's pills,
Wear woollen socks, they're the best you'll find,
Beware how you leave off flannel;
And, whatever you do, don't change your mind
When once you have picked your panel;
With a bank of cloud in the south-south-east,
Stand ready to shorten sail;
Fight shy of a corporation feast;
Don't trust to a martingale;
Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,
Not both, when you touch your trigger;
Don't stop with your head too frequently
(This advice ain't meant for a nigger);
Look before you leap, if you like, but if
You mean leaping, don't look long,
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,
And the strongest doubly strong;
As far as you can, to every man,
Let your aid be freely given,
And hit out straight, 'tis your shortest plan,
When against the ropes you're driven.

Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,
Is wiser than blank dismay,
Since " No sparrow can fall before its time,"
And we're valued higher than they ;
So hope for the best, and leave the rest
In charge of a stronger hand,
Like the honest boors in the far-off west,
With the formula terse and grand.

They were men, for the most part rough and rude,
Dull and illiterate,
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no feud,
They were strangers to spite and hate ;
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,
That brothers and sons might learn
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,
And strike his best with a strong right hand,
And take his strokes in return.
" 'Twas a barbarous practice," the quaker cries,
" 'Tis a thing of the past, thank heaven "—

Keep your thanks till the combative instinct
dies
With the taint of the olden leaven ;
Yes, the times are changed, for better or worse,
The prayer that no harm befall
Has given its place to a drunken curse,
And the manly game to a brawl.

Our burdens are heavy, our natures weak,
Some pastime devoid of harm
May we look for ? " Puritan elder, speak ! "
" Yea, friend, peradventure thou mayest seek
Recreation singing a psalm."
If I did, your visage so grim and stern
Would relax in a ghastly smile,
For of music I never one note could learn,
And my feeble minstrelsy would turn
Your chant to discord vile.

Tho' the Philistine's mail could naught avail,
Nor the spear like a weaver's beam,
There are episodes yet in the Psalmist's tale,
To obliterate which his poems fail,
Which his exploits fail to redeem.
Can the Hittite's wrongs forgotten be ?

Does HE warble "*Non nobis Domine*,"
With his monarch in blissful concert, free
From all malice to flesh inherent;
Zeruiah's offspring, who served so well,
Yet between the horns of the altar fell—
Does HIS voice the "*Quid gloriaris*" swell,
Or the "*Quare fremuerunt*"?
It may well be thus, where DAVID sings,
And Uriah joins in the chorus,
But while earth to earthy matter clings,
Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings
As a pattern can stand before us.

FYTTE V

LEX TALIONIS

A MORAL DISCOURSE

"And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer."—W. SCOTT.

To beasts of the field, and fowls of the air,
And fish of the sea alike,
Man's hand is ever slow to spare,
And ever ready to strike;
With a license to kill, and to work our will,
In season by land or by water,

To our heart's content we may take our fill
Of the joys we derive from slaughter.

And few, I reckon, our rights gainsay
In this world of rapine and wrong,
Where the weak and the timid seem lawful prey
For the resolute and the strong;
Fins, furs, and feathers, they are and were
For our use and pleasure created,
We can shoot, and hunt, and angle, and snare,
Unquestioned, if not unsated.

I have neither the will nor the right to blame,
Yet to many (though not to all)
The sweets of destruction are somewhat tame,
When no personal risks befall;
Our victims suffer but little, we trust
(Mere guess work and blank enigma),
If they suffer at all, our field sports must
Of cruelty bear the stigma.

Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates, thus
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,
When the measure we mete is meted to us,
When we reap as we've always sown?

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Shall we who for pastime have squander'd life,
  Who are styled "the Lords of Creation,"
Recoil from our chance of more equal strife,
  And our risk of retaliation?

Though short is the dying pheasant's pain,
  Scant pity you may well spare,
And the partridge slain is a triumph vain,
  And a risk that a child may dare;
You feel, when you lower the smoking gun,
  Some ruth for yon slaughtered hare,
And hit or miss, in your selfish fun
  The widgeon has little share.

But you've no remorseful qualms or pangs
  When you kneel by the grizzly's lair,
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs,
  'Tis the weak one's advantage fair,
And the shaggy giant's terrific fangs
  Are ready to crush and tear;
Should you miss, one vision of home and
      friend,
  Five words of unfinish'd prayer,
Three savage knife stabs, so your sport
      ends

In the worrying grapple that chokes and
rends;—
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.

Short shrift! sharp fate! dark doom to dree!
Hard struggle, tho' quickly ending!
At home or abroad, by land or sea,
In peace or war, sore trials must be,
And worse may happen to you or to me,
For none are secure, and none can flee
From a destiny impending.

Ah! friend, did you think when the *London*
sank,
Timber by timber, plank by plank,
In a cauldron of boiling surf,
How alone at least, with never a flinch,
In a rally contested inch by inch,
You could fall on the trampled turf?
When a livid wall of the sea leaps high,
In the lurid light of a leaden sky,
And bursts on the quarter railing;
While the howling storm-gust seems to vie
With the crash of splintered beams that fly,
Yet fails too oft to smother the cry
Of women and children wailing?

Then those who listen in sinking ships,
To despairing sobs from their lov'd one's lips,
  Where the green wave thus slowly shatters,
May long for the crescent-claw that rips
The bison into ribbons and strips,
  And tears the strong elk to tatters.
Oh! sunderings short of body and breath!
Oh! "battle and murder and sudden death!"
  Against which the Liturgy preaches;
By the will of a just, yet a merciful Power,
Less bitter, perchance, in the mystic hour,
When the wings of the shadowy angel lower,
  Than man in his blindness teaches!

Fytte VI

POTTERS' CLAY

AN ALLEGORICAL INTERLUDE

"Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas."

Though the pitcher that goes to the sparkling rill
  Too oft gets broken at last,
There are scores of others its place to fill
  When its earth to the earth is cast;
Keep that pitcher at home, let it never roam,
  But lie like a useless clod,

Yet sooner or later the hour will come
When its chips are thrown to the sod.

Is it wise, then, say, in the waning day,
When the vessel is crack't and old,
To cherish the battered potters' clay,
As though it were virgin gold?
Take care of yourself, dull, boorish elf,
Though prudent and safe you seem,
Your pitcher will break on the musty shelf,
And mine by the dazzling stream.

Fytte VII

CITO PEDE PRETERIT ÆTAS

A PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATION

"Gillian's dead, God rest her bier—
How I loved her many years syne;
Marion's married, but I sit here,
Alive and merry at three-score year,
Dipping my nose in Gascoigne wine."
Wamba's Song.—THACKERAY.

A mellower light doth Sol afford,
His meridian glare has pass'd,
And the trees on the broad and sloping sward
Their length'ning shadows cast.
"Time flies." The current will be no joke,
If swollen by recent rain,

To cross in the dark, so I'll have a smoke
And then I'll be off again.

What's up, old horse? Your ears you prick,
And your eager eyeballs glisten;
'Tis the wild dog's note, in the tea-tree thick,
By the river, to which you listen.
With head erect, and tail flung out,
For a gallop you seem to beg,
But I feel the qualm of a chilling doubt
As I glance at your fav'rite leg.

Let the dingo rest, 'tis all for the best,
In this world there's room enough
For him and you and me and the rest,
And the country is awful rough.
We've had our gallop in days of yore,
Now down the hill we must run,
Yet at times we long for one gallop more,
Although it were only one.

Did our spirits quail at a new four-rail,
Could a "double" double-bank us,
Ere nerve and sinew began to fail
In the consulship of Plancus?

When our blood ran rapidly, and when
  Our bones were pliant and limber,
Could we stand a merry cross-counter then,
  A slogging fall over timber?

Arcades ambo! Duffers both,
  In our best of days, alas!
(I tell the truth, though to tell it loth)
  'Tis time we were gone to grass;
The young leaves shoot, the sere leaves fall,
  And the old gives way to the new,
While the preacher cries, "'Tis vanity all,
  And vexation of spirit too."

Now over my head the vapours curl
  From the bowl of the soothing clay,
In the misty forms that eddy and whirl
  My thoughts are flitting away;
Yes, the preacher's right, 'tis vanity all,
  But the sweeping rebuke he showers
On vanities all may heaviest fall
  On vanities worse than ours.

We have no wish to exaggerate
  The worth of the sports we prize,

Some toil for their church, and some for their
state,
And some for their merchandise;
Some traffic and trade in the city's mart,
Some travel by land and sea,
Some follow science, some cleave to art,
And some to scandal and tea;

And some for their country and their queen
Would fight, if the chance they had,
Good sooth, 'twere a sorry world, I ween,
If we all went galloping mad;
Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase
From the land, and out-root the Stud,
GOOD-BYE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE!
FAREWELL TO THE NORMAN BLOOD!

Where the burn runs down to the uplands
brown
From the heights of the snow-clad range,
What anodyne drawn from the stifling town
Can be reckon'd a fair exchange
For the stalker's stride, on the mountain
side,
In the bracing northern weather,

To the slopes where couch, in their antler'd
pride,
The deer on the perfum'd heather.

Oh! the vigour with which the air is rife!
The spirit of joyous motion;
The fever, the fulness of animal life,
Can be drain'd from no earthly potion!
The lungs with the living gas grow light,
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,
While the chest expands with its madd'ning
might,
God's glorious oxgyen.

Thus the measur'd stroke, on elastic sward,
Of the steed three parts extended,
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad
With the golden ether blended;
Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,
The rush through the buoyant air,
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf
Is an emperor then and there!

Such scenes! sensation and sound and sight!
To some undiscover'd shore

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

On the current of Time's remorseless flight,
Have they swept to return no more?
While, like phantoms bright of the fever'd night,
That have vex'd our slumbers of yore,
You follow us still in your ghostly might,
Dead days that have gone before.

Vain dreams, again and again retold,
Must you crowd on the weary brain,
Till the fingers are cold that entwin'd of old
Round foil and trigger and rein,
Till stay'd for aye are the roving feet,
Till the restless hands are quiet,
Till the stubborn heart has forgotten to beat,
Till the hot blood has ceas'd to riot.

In Exeter Hall the saint may chide,
The sinner may scoff outright,
The Bacchanal steep'd in the flagon's tide,
Or the sensual Sybarite;
But NOLAN'S name will flourish in fame,
When our galloping days are past,
When we go from the place from whence we came,
Perchance to find rest at last.

Thy riddles grow dark, oh! drifting cloud,
And thy misty shapes grow drear,
Thou hang'st in the air like a shadowy shroud,
But I am of lighter cheer;
Though our future lot is a sable blot,
Though the wise ones of earth will blame us,
Though our saddles will rot, and our rides be forgot,
"Dum Vivimus, Vivamus!"

Fytte VIII

FINIS EXOPTATUS

A METAPHYSICAL SONG

"There's something in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by-and-bye."—Tennyson.

Boot and saddle, see, the slanting
Rays begin to fall,
Flinging lights and colours flaunting
Through the shadows tall.
Onward! onward! must we travel?
When will come the goal?
Riddle I may not unravel,
Cease to vex my soul.

FINIS EXOPTATUS

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Harshly break those peals of laughter
From the jays aloft,
Can we guess what they cry after,
We have heard them oft;
Perhaps some strain of rude thanksgiving
Mingles in their song,
Are they glad that they are living?
Are they right or wrong?
Right, 'tis joy that makes them call so,
Why should they be sad?
Certes! we are living also,
Shall not we be glad?
Onward! onward! must we travel?
Is the goal more near?
Riddle we may not unravel,
Why so dark and drear?

Yon small bird his hymn outpouring
On the branch close by,
Recks not for the kestrel soaring
In the nether sky,
Though the hawk with wings extended
Poises overhead,
Motionless as though suspended
By a viewless thread.

See, he stoops, nay, shooting forward
With the arrow's flight,
Swift and straight away to nor'ward
Sails he out of sight.
Onward! onward! thus we travel,
Comes the goal more nigh?
Riddle we may not unravel,
Who shall make reply?

Ha! Friend Ephraim, saint or sinner,
Tell me if you can—
Tho' we may not judge the inner
By the outer man,
Yet by girth of broadcloth ample,
And by cheeks that shine,
Surely you set no example
In the fasting line—

Could you, like yon bird, discov'ring
Fate as close at hand,
As the kestrel o'er him hov'ring,
Still, as he did, stand?
Trusting grandly, singing gaily,
Confident and calm,
Not one false note in your daily
Hymn or weekly psalm?

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Oft your oily tones are heard in
  Chapel, where you preach,
This the everlasting burden
  Of the tale you teach :
"We are d—d, our sins are deadly,
  You alone are heal'd"—
'Twas not thus their gospel redly
  Saints and martyrs seal'd.
You had seem'd more like a martyr,
  Than you seem to us,
To the beasts that caught a Tartar
  Once at Ephesus;
Rather than the stout apostle
  Of the Gentiles, who,
Pagan-like, could cuff and wrestle,
  They'd have chosen you.

Yet, I ween, on such occasion
  Your dissenting voice
Would have been, in mild persuasion,
  Raised against their choice;
Man of peace, and man of merit,
  Pompous, wise, and grave,
Ephraim! is it flesh or spirit
  You strive most to save?

Vain is half this care and caution
O'er the earthly shell,
We can neither baffle nor shun
Dark-plumed Azrael.
Onward! onward! still we wander,
Nearer draws the goal;
Half the riddle's read, we ponder
Vainly on the whole.

Eastward! in the pink horizon,
Fleecy hillocks shame
This dim range dull earth that lies on,
Tinged with rosy flame.
Westward! as a stricken giant
Stoops his bloody crest,
And tho' vanquish'd, frowns defiant,
Sinks the sun to rest.
Distant yet, approaching quickly,
From the shades that lurk,
Like a black pall gathers thickly
Night, when none may work.
Soon our restless occupation
Shall have ceas'd to be;
Units! in God's vast creation,
Ciphers! what are we?

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Onward! onward! oh! faint-hearted;
Nearer and more near
Has the goal drawn since we started,
Be of better cheer.

Preacher! all forbearance ask, for
All are worthless found,
Man must aye take man to task for
Faults while earth goes round.
On this dank soil thistles muster,
Thorns are broadcast sown;
See not figs where thistles cluster,
Grapes where thorns have grown.

Sun and rain and dew from heaven,
Light and shade and air,
Heat and moisture freely given,
Thorns and thistles share.
Vegetation rank and rotten
Feels the cheering ray;
Not uncared for, unforgotten,
We, too, have our day.

Unforgotten! though we cumber
Earth, we work His will.

Shall we sleep through night's long slumber
  Unforgotten still?
Onward! onward! toiling ever,
  Weary steps and slow,
Doubting oft, despairing never,
  To the goal we go!

Hark! the bells on distant cattle
  Waft across the range,
Through the golden-tufted wattle,
  Music low and strange;
Like the marriage peal of fairies
  Comes the tinkling sound,
Or like chimes of sweet St Mary's
  On far English ground.
How my courser champs the snaffle,
  And with nostril spread,
Snorts and scarcely seems to ruffle
  Fern leaves with his tread;
Cool and pleasant on his haunches
  Blows the evening breeze,
Through the overhanging branches
  Of the wattle trees:
Onward! to the Southern Ocean,
  Glides the breath of Spring.

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Onward, with a dreamy motion,
I, too, glide and sing—
Forward! forward! still we wander—
Tinted hills that lie
In the red horizon yonder—
Is the goal so nigh?

Whisper, spring-wind, softly singing,
Whisper in my ear;
Respite and nepenthe bringing,
Can the goal be near?
Laden with the dew of vespers,
From the fragrant sky,
In my ear the wind that whispers
Seems to make reply—

"Question not, but live and labour
Till yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
KINDNESS in another's trouble,
COURAGE in your own."

Courage, comrades, this is certain,
All is for the best—
There are lights behind the curtain—
Gentles, let us rest.
As the smoke-wrack veers to seaward,
From the "ancient clay,"
With its moral drifting leeward,
Ends the wanderer's lay.

BORROW'D PLUMES

A PREFACE AND A PIRACY

PROLOGUE

Of borrow'd plumes I take the sin,
My extracts will apply
To some few silly songs which in
These pages scatter'd lie.

The words are Edgar Allan Poe's,
As any man may see,
But what a *Poe*-t wrote in prose,
Shall make blank verse for me.

EPILOGUE

And now that my theft stands detected,
The first of my extracts may call
To some of the rhymes here collected,
Your notice, the second to all.

Ah! friends, you may shake your head sadly,
Yet this much you'll say for my verse,
I've written of old something badly,
But written anew something worse.

PASTOR CUM

TRANSLATION FROM HORACE

When he, that shepherd false, 'neath Phrygian sails,
Carried his hostess Helen o'er the seas,
In fitful slumber Nereus hush'd the gales,
That he might sing their future destinies.
A curse to your ancestral home you take
With her, whom Greece, with many a soldier bold,
Shall seek again, in concert sworn to break
Your nuptial ties and Priam's kingdom old.
Alas! what sweat from man and horse must flow,
What devastation to the Trojan realm
You carry, even now doth Pallas show
Her wrath—preparing buckler, car, and helm.
In vain, secure in Aphrodité's care,
You comb your locks, and on the girlish lyre
Select the strains most pleasant to the fair;
In vain, on couch reclining, you desire
To shun the darts that threaten, and the thrust

Of Cretan lance, the battle's wild turmoil,
And Ajax swift to follow—in the dust
Condemned, though late, your wanton curls to soil.
Ah! see you not where (fatal to your race),
Laertes' son comes with the Pylean sage;
Fearless alike, with Teucer joins the chase
Steneläus, skill'd the fistic strife to wage,
Nor less expert the fiery steeds to quell;
And Meriones, you must know. Behold
A warrior, than his sire more fierce and fell,
To find you rages,—Diomed the bold,
Whom, like the stag that, far across the vale
The wolf being seen, no herbage can allure,
So fly you, panting sorely, dastard pale!—
Not thus you boasted to your paramour.
Achilles' anger for a space defers
The day of wrath to Troy and Trojan dame;
Inevitable glide the allotted years,
And Dardan roofs must waste in Argive flame.

A LEGEND OF MADRID

[TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH]

Francesca

CRUSH'T and throng'd are all the places
In our amphitheatre,
'Midst a sea of swarming faces
I can yet distinguish her;
Dost thou triumph, dark-brow'd Nina?
Is my secret known to thee?
On the sands of yon arena
I shall yet my vengeance see.
Now through portals fast careering
Picadors are disappearing;
Now the barriers nimbly clearing
Has the hindmost chulo flown.
Clots of dusty crimson streaking,
Brindled flanks and haunches reeking,
Wheels the wild bull, vengeance seeking,
On the matador alone.
Features by sombrero shaded,
Pale and passionless and cold;
Doublet richly laced and braided,
Trunks of velvet slash'd with gold,
Blood-red scarf, and bare Toledo,—
Mask more subtle, and disguise

Far less shallow, thou dost need, oh
  Traitor, to deceive my eyes.
Shouts of noisy acclamation,
Breathing savage expectation,
Greet him while he takes his station
  Leisurely, disdaining haste;
Now he doffs his tall sombrero,
Fools! applaud your butcher hero,
Ye would idolise a Nero,
  Pandering to public taste.

From the restless Guadalquiver
  To my sire's estates he came,
Woo'd and won me,—how I shiver!
  Though my temples burn with
    shame.
I, a proud and high-born lady,
  Daughter of an ancient race,
'Neath the vine and olive shade I
  Yielded to a churl's embrace.
To a churl my vows were plighted,
Well my madness he requited,
Since, by priestly ties, united
  To the muleteer's child;
And my prayers are wafted o'er him,

That the bull may crush and gore him,
Since the love that once I bore him
  Has been changed to hatred wild.

Nina.

Save him! aid him! oh Madonna!
  Two are slain if he is slain;
Shield his life, and guard his honour,
  Let me not entreat in vain.
Sullenly the brindled savage
  Tears and tosses up the sand;
Horns that rend and hoofs that ravage,
  How shall man your shock withstand?
On the shaggy neck and head lie
Frothy flakes, the eyeballs redly
Flash, the horns so sharp and deadly
  Lower, short, and strong, and straight;
Fast, and furious, and fearless,
Now he charges;—virgin peerless,
Lifting lids, all dry and tearless,
  At thy throne I supplicate.

Francesca

Cool and calm, the perjured varlet
  Stands on strongly planted heel,

In his left a strip of scarlet,
In his right a streak of steel;
Ah! the monster topples over,
Till his haunches strike the plain!—
Low-born clown and lying lover,
Thou hast conquer'd once again.

Nina

Sweet Madonna, maiden mother,
Thou hast saved him, and no other;
Now the tears I cannot smother,
Tears of joy, my vision blind;
Where thou sittest I am gazing,
These glad, misty eyes upraising,
I have pray'd, and I am praising,
Bless thee! bless thee! virgin kind.

Francesca

While the crowd still sways and surges,
Ere the applauding shouts have ceas'd,
See, the second bull emerges—
'Tis the famed Cordovan beast,—
By the picador ungoaded,
Scathless of the chulo's dart.

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse

Slay him, and with guerdon loaded,
And with honours crown'd depart.
No vain brutish strife he wages,
Never uselessly he rages,
And his cunning, as he ages,
With his hatred seems to grow;
Though he stands amid the cheering,
Sluggish to the eye appearing,
Few will venture on the spearing
Of so resolute a foe.

Nina

Courage, there is little danger,
Yonder dull-eyed craven seems
Fitter far for stall and manger
Than for scarf and blade that gleams.
Shorter, and of frame less massive,
Than his comrade lying low,
Tame, and cowardly, and passive,—
He will prove a feebler foe.
I have done with doubt and anguish,
Fears like dews in sunshine languish,
Courage, husband, we shall vanquish,
Thou art calm and so am I.
For the rush he has not waited,

On he strides with step elated,
And the steel with blood unsated,
  Leaps to end the butchery.

Francesca

Tyro! mark the brands of battle
  On those shoulders dusk and dun,
Such as he is, are the cattle
  Skill'd tauridors gladly shun;
Warier than the Andalusian,
  Swifter far, though not so large,
Think'st thou, to his own confusion,
  He, like him, will blindly charge?
Inch by inch the brute advances,
Stealthy yet vindictive glances,
Horns as straight as levell'd lances,
  Crouching withers, stooping haunches;—
Closer yet, until the tightening
Strain of rapt excitement height'ning
Grows oppressive. Ha! like lightning
  On his enemy he launches.

Nina

O'er the horn'd front drops the streamer,
  In the nape the sharp steel hisses,

Glances, grazes,—Christ! Redeemer!
By a hair the spine he misses.

Francesca

Hark! that shock like muffled thunder,
Booming from the Pyrenees!
Both are down—the man is under—
Now he struggles to his knees,
Now he sinks, his features leaden
Sharpen rigidly and deaden,
Sands beneath him soak and redden,
Skies above him spin and veer;
Through the doublet, torn and riven,
Where the stunted horn was driven,
Wells the life blood—We are even,
Daughter of the muleteer!

FAUCONSHAWE

(A BALLAD)

To fetch clear water out of the spring
The little maid Margaret ran,
From the stream to the castle's western wing
It was but a bowshot span;
On the sedgy brink where the osiers cling
Lay a dead man, pallid and wan.

The lady Mabel rose from her bed,
And walked in the castle hall,
Where the porch through the western turret led,
She met with her handmaid small!
"What aileth thee, Margaret?" the lady said,
"Hast let thy pitcher fall?

"Say, what hast thou seen by the streamlet side,
A nymph or a water sprite?
That thou comest with eyes so wild and wide,
And with cheeks so ghostly white?"
"Nor nymph nor sprite," the maiden cried,
"But the corpse of a slaughtered knight."

The lady Mabel summon'd straight
To her presence Sir Hugh de Vere,
Of the guests who tarried within the gate
Of Fauconshawe, most dear
Was he to that lady; betrothed in state
They had been since many a year.

"Little Margaret sayeth a dead man lies
By the western spring, Sir Hugh;
I can scarce believe that the maiden lies—
Yet scarce can believe her true."
And the knight replies, "Till we test her eyes
Let her words gain credence due."

Down the rocky path knight and lady led,
While guests and retainers bold
Followed in haste, for like wildfire spread
The news by the maiden told.
They found 'twas even as she had said—
The corpse had some while been cold.

How the spirit had pass'd in the moments last
There was little trace to reveal;
On the still, calm face lay no imprint ghast,
Save the angel's solemn seal,

Yet the hands were clench'd in a death-grip
fast,
And the sods stamp't down by the heel.

Sir Hugh by the side of the dead man knelt,
Said, "Full well these features I know,
We have faced each other where blows were
dealt,
And he was a stalwart foe;
I had rather have met him hilt to hilt
Than have found him lying low."

He turn'd the body up on its face,
And never a word was spoken,
While he ripp'd the doublet, and tore the lace,
And tugg'd—by the self-same token,—
And strain'd, till he wrench't it out of its place,
The dagger-blade that was broken.

Then he turn'd the body over again,
And said, while he rose upright,
"May the brand of Cain, with its withering
stain,
On the murderer's forehead light,
For he never was slain on the open plain,
Nor yet in the open fight."

Solemn and stern were the words he spoke,
And he look'd at his lady's men,
But his speech no answering echoes woke,
All were silent there and then,
Till a clear, cold voice the silence broke :—
Lady Mabel cried, "Amen."

His glance met hers, the twain stood hush'd,
With the dead between them there;
But the blood to her snowy temples rush't
Till it tinged the roots of her hair,
Then paled, but a thin red streak still flush't
In the midst of her forehead fair.

Four yeomen raised the corpse from the ground,
At a sign from Sir Hugh de Vere,
It was borne to the western turret round,
And laid on a knightly bier,
With never a sob nor a mourning sound,—
No friend to the dead was near.

Yet that night was neither revel nor dance
In the halls of Fauconshawe;
Men look'd askance with a doubtful glance
At Sir Hugh, for they stood in awe

Of his prowess, but he, like one in a trance,
Regarded naught that he saw.

. . . . .

Night, black and chill, wind gathering still,
With its wail in the turret tall,
And its headlong blast like a catapult cast
On the crest of the outer wall,
And its hail and rain on the crashing pane,
Till the glassy splinters fall ;

A moody knight by the fitful light
Of the great hall fire below ;
A corpse upstairs, and a woman at prayers,
Will they profit her, aye or no ?
By'r lady fain, an she comfort gain,
There is comfort for us also.

The guests were gone, save Sir Hugh alone,
And he watched the gleams that broke
On the pale hearth-stone, and flickered and
shone
On the panels of polish'd oak ;
He was 'ware of no presence except his own,
Till the voice of young Margaret spoke :

"I've risen, Sir Hugh, at the mirk midnight,
I cannot sleep in my bed,
Now, unless my tale can be told aright,
I wot it were best unsaid;
It lies, the blood of yon northern knight,
On my lady's hand and head."

"Oh! the wild wind raves and rushes along,
But thy ravings seem more wild—
She never could do so foul a wrong—
Yet I blame thee not, my child,
For the fever'd dreams on thy rest that
throng!"—
He frown'd though his speech was mild.

"Let storm-winds eddy, and scream, and hurl
Their wrath, they disturb me naught;
The daughter she of a high-born earl,
No secret of hers I've sought;
I am but the child of a peasant churl,
Yet look to the proofs I've brought;

"This dagger snap't so close to the hilt—
Dost remember thy token well?
Will it match with the broken blade that spilt
His life in the western dell?

Nay; read her handwriting, an thou wilt,
From her paramour's breast it fell."

The knight in silence the letter read,
Oh! the characters well he knew!
And his face might have matched the face of the dead,
So ashen white was its hue!
Then he tore the parchment, shred by shred,
And the strips in the flames he threw.

And he muttered, "Densely those shadows fall
In the copse where the alders thicken;
There she bade him come to her, once for all,—
Now, I well may shudder and sicken;—
Gramercy! that hand so white and small,
How strongly it must have stricken!"

. . . . .

At midnight hour, in the western tower,
Alone with the dead man there,
Lady Mabel kneels, nor heeds nor feels
The shock of the rushing air,
Though the gusts that pass through the riven glass
Have scattered her raven hair.

Across the floor, through the opening door,
Where standeth a stately knight,
The lamplight streams, and flickers, and
gleams,
On his features stern and white—
'Tis Sir Hugh de Vere, and he cometh more
near,
And the lady standeth upright.

"'Tis little," he said, "that I know or care
Of the guilt (if guilt there be)
That lies 'twixt thee and yon dead man there,
Nor matters it now to me;
I thought thee pure, thou art only fair,
And to-morrow I cross the sea.

"He perish'd! I ask not why or how?
I come to recall my troth;
Take back, my lady, thy broken vow,
Give back my allegiance oath;
Let the past be buried between us now
For ever—'tis best for both.

"Yet, Mabel, I could ask, dost thou dare
Lay hand on that corpse's heart,

And call on thy Maker, and boldly swear
That thou had'st in his death no part?
I ask not, while threescore proofs I share
With one doubt—uncondemn'd thou art."

Oh! cold and bleak upon Mabel's cheek
Came the blast of the storm-wind keen,
And her tresses black, as the glossy back
Of the raven, glanced between
Her fingers slight, like the ivory white,
As she parted their sable sheen.

Yet with steady lip, and with fearless eye,
And with cheek like the flush of dawn,
Unflinchingly she spoke in reply—
"Go hence with the break of morn,
I will neither confess, nor yet deny,
I will return thee scorn for scorn."

The knight bow'd low as he turn'd to go;
He travel'd by land and sea,
But naught of his future fate I know,
And naught of his fair ladye;—
My story is told, as, long ago,
My story was told to me.

RIPPLING WATER

The maiden sat by the river side,
(The rippling water murmurs by),
And sadly into the clear blue tide
The salt tear fell from her clear blue eye.
"'Tis fixed for better, for worse," she cried,
"And to-morrow the bridegroom claims the bride.
Oh! wealth and power and rank and pride
Can surely peace and happiness buy.
I was merry, nathless, in my girlhood's hours,
'Mid the waving grass, when the bright sun shone,
Shall I be as merry in Marmaduke's towers?"
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Stephen works for his daily bread.
(The rippling water murmurs low.)
Through the crazy thatch that covers his head
The rain-drops fall and the wind-gusts blow.
"I'll mend the old roof-tree," so he said,
"And repair the cottage when we are wed,"
And my pulses throbb'd, and my cheek grew red,
When he kiss't me—that was long ago.

Stephen and I, should we meet again,
Not as we've met in days that are gone,
Will my pulses throb with pleasure or pain?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Old Giles, the gardener, strok't my curls,
(The rippling water murmurs past),
Quoth he, "In laces and silks and pearls
My child will see her reflections cast;
Now I trust in my heart that your lord will be
Kinder to you than he was to me,
When I lay in the jail, and my children three
With their sickly mother kept bitter fast."
With Marmaduke now my will is law,
Marmaduke's will may be law anon;
Does the sheaf of velvet cover the claw?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Dame Martha patted me on the cheek,
(The rippling water murmurs low),
Saying, "There are words that I fain would speak—
Perhaps they were best unspoken though;
I can't persuade you to change your mind,
And useless warnings are scarcely kind,

And I may be foolish as well as blind,
  But take my blessing whether or no."
Dame Martha's wise, though her hair is white,
  Her sense is good, though her sight is
      gone—
Can she really be gifted with second sight?
  (The rippling water murmurs on.)

Brian of Hawksmede came to our cot,
  (The rippling water murmurs by),
Scatter'd the sods of our garden plot,
  Riding his roan horse recklessly;
Trinket and token and tress of hair,
He flung them down at the door-step there,
Said, "Elsie! ask your lord, if you dare,
  Who gave him the blow as well as the lie."
That evening I mentioned Brian's name,
  And Marmaduke's face grew white and wan.
Am I pledged to one of a spirit so tame?
  (The rippling water murmurs on.)

Brian is headstrong, rash, and vain,
  (The rippling water murmurs still),
Stephen is somewhat duller of brain,
  Slower of speech, and milder of will;

Stephen must toil a living to gain,
Plough and harrow and gather the grain;
Brian has little enough to maintain
  The station in life which he needs must fill;
Both are fearless and kind and frank,
  But we can't win all gifts under the sun—
What have I won save riches and rank?
  (The rippling water murmurs on.)

Riches and rank, and what beside,
  (The rippling water murmurs yet),
The mansion is stately, the manor is wide,
  Their lord for a while may pamper and pet;
Liveried lackeys may jeer aside,
Though the peasant girl is their master's bride,
At her shyness mingled with awkward pride,—
  'Twere folly for trifles like these to fret;
But the love of one that I cannot love,
  Will it last when the gloss of his toy is gone?
Is there naught beyond, below, or above?
  (The rippling water murmurs on.)

CUI BONO

Oh! wind that whistles o'er thorns and
thistles
Of this fruitful earth like a goblin elf;
Why should he labour to help his neighbour
Who feels too reckless to help himself?
The wail of the breeze in the bending trees
Is something between a laugh and a groan;
And the hollow roar of the surf on the shore
Is a dull, discordant monotone;
I wish I could guess what sense they express,
There's a meaning, doubtless, in every
sound,
Yet no one can tell, and it may be as well,—
Whom would it profit? the world goes
round!

On this earth so rough, we know quite enough,
And, I sometimes fancy, a little too much;
The sage may be wiser than clown or than
kaiser,
Is he more to be envied for being such?
Neither more nor less, in his idleness,
The sage is doom'd to vexation sure;
The kaiser may rule, but the slippery stool
That he calls his throne, is no sinecure;

And as for the clown, you may give him a
crown,
Maybe he'll thank you, and maybe not,
And before you can wink, he may spend it in
drink—
To whom does it profit?—We ripe and rot!

Yet under the sun much work is done
By clown and kaiser, by serf and sage;
All sow and some reap, and few gather the
heap
Of the garner'd grain of a by-gone age.
By sea or by soil man is bound to toil,
And the dreamer, waiting for time and tide,
For awhile may shirk his share of the work,
But he grows with his dream dissatisfied;
He may climb to the edge of the beetling
ledge,
Where the loose crag topples and well-nigh
reels
'Neath the lashing gale, but the tonic will
fail,—
What does it profit?—Wheels within
wheels!

CUI BONO

Aye! work we must, or with idlers rust,
And eat we must our bodies to nurse;
Some folk grow fatter—what does it matter?
I'm blest if I do—quite the reverse;
'Tis a weary round to which we are bound,
The same thing over and over again;
Much toil and trouble, and a glittering bubble
That rises and bursts, is the best we gain;
And we murmur, and yet, 'tis certain, we get
What good we deserve—can we hope for more?—
They are roaring, those waves, in their echoing caves,—
To whom do they profit!—Let them roar.

BELLONA

Thou art moulded in marble impassive,
False goddess, fair statue of strife,
Yet standest on pedestal massive,
A symbol and token of life.
Thou art still, not with stillness of
languor,
And calm, not with calm boding rest;
For thine is all wrath and all anger
That throbs far and near in the breast
Of man, by thy presence possess'd.

With the brow of a fallen archangel,
The lips of a beautiful fiend,
And locks that are snake-like to strangle,
And eyes from whose depths may be
glean'd
The presence of passions, that tremble
Unbidden, yet shine as they may
Through features too proud to dissemble,
Too cold and too calm to betray
Their secrets to creatures of clay.

Thy breath stirreth faction and party,
Men rise, and no voice can avail

To stay them—rose-tinted Astarte
Herself at thy presence turns pale.
For deeper and richer the crimson
That gathers behind thee throws forth
A halo thy raiment and limbs on,
And leaves a red track in the path
That flows from thy wine-press of wrath.

For behind thee red rivulets trickle,
Men fall by thy hands, swift and lithe,
As corn falleth down to the sickle,
As grass falleth down to the scythe.
Thine arm, strong, and cruel, and shapely,
Lifts high the sharp, pitiless lance,
And rapine and ruin and rape lie
Around thee. The Furies advance,
And Ares awakes from his trance.

We, too, with our bodies thus weakly,
With hearts hard and dangerous, thus
We owe thee—the saints suffered meekly
Their wrongs—it is not so with us.
Some share of thy strength thou hast given
To mortals refusing in vain

Thine aid. We have suffered and striven
Till we have grown reckless of pain,
Though feeble of heart and of brain.

Fair spirit, alluring if wicked,
False deity, terribly real,
Our senses are trapp'd, our souls trickéd
By thee and thy hollow ideal.
The soldier who falls in his harness,
And strikes his last stroke with slack hand,
On his dead face thy wrath and thy scorn is
Imprinted. Oh! seeks he a land
Where he shall escape thy command?

When the blood of thy victims lies red on
That stricken field, fiercest and last,
In the sunset that gilds Armageddon
With battle-drift still overcast.
When the smoke of thy hot conflagrations
O'ershadows the earth as with wings,
Where nations have fought against nations,
And kings have encounter'd with kings,
When cometh the end of all things.

Then those who have patiently waited,
And borne, unresisting, the pain

BELLONA

Of thy vengeance unglutted, unsated,
Shall they be rewarded again?
Then those who, enticed by thy laurels,
Or urged by thy promptings unblest,
Have striven and stricken in quarrels,
Shall they, too, find pardon and rest?
We know not, yet we hope for the best.

THE SONG OF THE SURF

White steeds of ocean, that leap with a hollow and wearisome roar
On the bar of ironstone steep, not a fathom's length from the shore,
Is there never a seer nor sophist can interpret your wild refrain,
When speech the harshest and roughest is seldom studied in vain?
My ears are constantly smitten by that dreary monotone,
In a hieroglyphic 'tis written—'tis spoken in a tongue unknown;
Gathering, growing, and swelling, and surging, and shivering, say!
What is the tale you are telling? What is the drift of your lay?

You come, and your crests are hoary with the foam of your countless years;
You break, with a rainbow of glory, through the spray of your glittering tears.
Is your song a song of gladness? a pæan of joyous might?
Or a wail of discordant sadness for the wrongs you never can right?

THE SONG OF THE SURF

For the empty seat by the ingle? for children
'reft of their sire?
For the bride, sitting, sad, and single, and pale,
by the flickering fire?
For your ravenous pools of suction? for your
shattering billow swell?
For your ceaseless work of destruction? for
your hunger insatiable?

Not far from this very place, on the sand and
the shingle dry,
He lay, with his batter'd face upturn'd to the
frowning sky.
When your waters wash'd and swill'd high
over his drowning head,
When his nostrils and lungs were fill'd, when
his feet and hands were as lead,
When against the rock he was hurl'd, and
suck'd again to the sea,
On the shores of another world, on the brink
of eternity,
On the verge of annihilation, did it come to
that swimmer strong,
The sudden interpretation of your mystical,
weird-like song?

" Mortal! that which thou askest, ask not thou
of the waves;
Fool! thou foolishly taskest us—we are only
slaves;
Might, more mighty, impels us—we must our
lot fulfil,
He who gathers and swells us curbs us too at
His will.
Think'st thou the wave that shatters ques-
tioneth His decree?
Little to us it matters, and naught it matters
to thee.
Not, thus murmuring idly, we from our duty
would swerve,
Over the world spread widely, ever we labour
and serve."

IN WATTLE-BOUGHS

Oh, gaily sings the bird, and the wattle-boughs
are stirr'd
And rustled by the scented breath of
spring;
Oh, the dreary wistful longing! Oh, the faces
that are thronging!
Oh, the voices that are vaguely whispering!

Oh, tell me, father mine, ere the good ship
cross't the brine,
On the gangway one mute hand-grip we
exchang'd,
Do you, past the grave, employ, for your
stubborn, reckless boy,
Those petitions that in life were ne'er
estranged?

Oh, tell me, sister dear, parting word and
parting tear
Never pass'd between us;—let me bear the
blame.
Are you living, girl, or dead? bitter tears
since then I've shed
For the lips that lisp'd with mine a mother's
name.

Oh, tell me, ancient friend, ever ready to
defend
In our boyhood, at the base of life's long
hill,
Are you waking yet or sleeping? have you
left this vale of weeping?
Or do you, like your comrade, linger still?

Oh, whisper, buried love, is there rest and
peace above?—
There is little hope or comfort here below;
On your sweet face lies the mould, and your
bed is straight and cold—
Near the harbour where the sea-tides ebb
and flow.

. . . . .

All silent—they are dumb—and the breezes
go and come
With an apathy that mocks at man's
distress;
Laugh, scoffer, while you may! I could bow
me down and pray
For an answer that might stay my bitter-
ness.

IN WATTLE-BOUGHS

Oh, harshly screams the bird! and the wattle-
bloom is stirr'd;
There's a sullen, weird-like whisper in the
bough:
"Aye, kneel, and pray, and weep, but HIS
BELOVED SLEEP
CAN NEVER BE DISTURB'D BY SUCH AS
THOU!"

CONFITEOR

The shore-boat lies in the morning light,
By the good ship ready for sailing;
The skies are clear, and the dawn is bright,
Tho' the bar of the bay is fleck'd with white,
And the wind is fitfully wailing;
Near the tiller stands the priest, and the knight
Leans over the quarter-railing.

"There is time while the vessel tarries still,
There is time while her shrouds are slack,
There is time ere her sails to the west-wind fill,
Ere her tall masts vanish from town and from hill,
Ere cleaves to her keel the track;
There is time for confession to those who will,
To those who may never come back."

"Sir priest, you can shrive these men of mine,
And, I pray you, shrive them fast,
And shrive those hardy sons of the brine,
Captain and mates of the *Eglantine*
And sailors before the mast;
Then pledge me a cup of the Cyprus wine,
For I fain would bury the past."

CONFITEOR

"And hast thou naught to repent, my son?
Dost thou scorn confession and shrift?
Ere thy sands from the glass of time shall run,
Is there naught undone that thou should'st have done,
Naught done that thou should'st have left?
The guiltiest soul may from guilt be won,
And the stoniest heart may be cleft."

"Have my ears been closed to the prayer of the poor.
Or deaf to the cry of distress?
Have I given little, and taken more?
Have I brought a curse to the widow's door?
Have I wrong'd the fatherless?
Have I steep't my fingers in guiltless gore,
That I must perforce confess?"

"Have thy steps been guided by purity
Through the paths with wickedness rife?
Hast thou never smitten thine enemy?
Hast thou yielded naught to the lust of the eye,
And naught to the pride of life?
Hast thou pass'd all snares of pleasure by?
Hast thou shunn'd all wrath and strife?"

"Nay, certes! a sinful life I've led,
Yet I've suffer'd, and lived in hope;
I may suffer still, but my hope has fled,—
I've nothing now to hope or to dread,
And with fate I can fairly cope;
Were the waters closing over my head,
I should scarcely catch at a rope."

"Dost suffer? thy pain may be fraught with grace,
Since never by works alone
We are saved;—the penitent thief may trace
The wealth of love in the Saviour's face
To the Pharisee rarely shown;
And the Magdalene's arms may yet embrace
The foot of the jasper throne."

"Sir priest, a heavier doom I dree,
For I feel no quickening pain,
But a dull, dumb weight, when I bow my knee,
And (not with the words of the Pharisee)
My hard eyes heavenward strain,
Where my dead darling prayeth for me!
Now, I wot, she prayeth in vain!

CONFITEOR

"Still I hear it over the battle's din,
And over the festive cheer,—
So she pray'd with clasp'd hands, white and thin,—
The prayer of a soul absolved from sin,
For a soul that is dark and drear,
For the light of repentance bursting in,
And the flood of the blinding tear.

"Say, priest! when the saint must vainly plead,
Oh! how shall the sinner fare?
I hold your comfort a broken reed;
Let the wither'd branch for itself take heed,
While the green shoots wait your care;
I've striven, though feebly, to grasp your creed,
And I've grappled my own despair."

"By the little within thee, good and brave,
Not wholly shattered, though shaken;
By the soul that crieth beyond the grave,
The love that He once in His mercy gave,
In His mercy since retaken,
I conjure thee, oh! sinner, pardon crave!
I implore thee, oh! sleeper, waken!"

"Go to! shall I lay my black soul bare
To a vain, self-righteous man?
In my sin, in my sorrow, you may not share,
And yet, could I meet with one who must bear
The load of an equal ban,
With him I might strive to blend one prayer,
The wail of the Publican."

"My son, I, too, am a wither'd bough,
My place is to others given;
Thou hast sinn'd, thou sayest; I ask not how,
For I, too, have sinn'd, even as thou,
And I, too, have feebly striven,
And with thee I must bow, crying, 'Shrive
us now!
Our Father which art in heaven!'"

SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA

THE PHILOSOPHY OF A FEAST

MAKE merry, comrades, eat and drink,
(The sunlight flickers on the sea),
The garlands gleam, the glasses clink,
The grape juice mantles fair and free,
The lamps are trimm'd, although the light
Of day still lingers on the sky;
We sit between the day and night,
And push the wine-flask merrily.
I see you feasting round me still,
All gay of heart and strong of limb;
Make merry, friends, your glasses fill,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the voice of one I've heard,
(The sunlight sinks upon the sea),
He sang as blithe as any bird,
And shook the rafters with his glee;
But times have changed with him, I wot,
By fickle fortune cross't and flung;
Far stouter heart than mine he's got
If now he sings as then he sung,
Yet some must swim when others sink;
And some must sink when others swim;

Make merry, comrades, eat and drink,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the face of one I've loved—
(The sunlight settles on the sea);
Long since to distant climes he roved;
He had his faults, and so have we;
His name was mentioned here this day,
And it was coupled with a sneer;
I heard, nor had I ought to say,
Though once I held his memory dear,
Who cares 'mid wines and fruit and flowers,
Though death or danger compass him,
He had his faults, and we have ours,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the form of one I know—
(The sunlight wanes upon the sea);
'Tis not so very long ago
We drank his health with three-times-three,
And we were gay when he was here;
And he is gone, and we are gay.
Where has he gone? or far or near?
Good sooth, 'twere somewhat hard to say.

SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA

You glance aside, you doubtless think
  My homily a foolish whim,
'Twill soon be ended, eat and drink,
  The lights are growing dim.

The fruit is ripe, the wine is red,
  (The sunlight fades upon the sea);
To us the absent are the dead,
  The dead to us must absent be.
We, too, the absent ranks must join;
  And friends will censure and forget:
There's metal base in every coin;
  Men vanish, leaving traces yet
Of evil, and of good behind,
  Since false notes taint the skylark's
    hymn,
And dross still lurks in gold refined—
  The lights are growing dim.

We eat or drink or e'er we die,
  (The sunlight flushes on the sea).
Three hundred soldiers feasted high
  An hour before Thermopylæ;
Leonidas pour'd out the wine
  And shouted ere he drain'd the cup,

"Ho! comrades, let us gaily dine—
This night with Plato we shall sup";
And if they lean't upon a reed,
And if their reed was slight and slim,
There's something good in Spartan creed,
The lights are growing dim.

Make merry, comrades, eat and drink,
(The sunlight flashes on the sea);
My spirit is rejoiced to think
That even as they were, so are we;
For they, like us, were mortals vain,
The slaves to earthly passions wild,
Who slept with heaps of Persians slain
For winding-sheets around them piled.
The dead man's deeds are living still—
My Festive speech is somewhat grim—
Their good obliterates their ill,
The lights are growing dim.

We eat and drink, we come and go,
(The sunlight dies upon the sea).
I speak in riddles. Is it so?
My riddles need not mar your glee;

For I will neither bid you share
  My thoughts, nor will I bid you shun,
Though I should see in yonder chair,
  Th' Egyptian's muffled skeleton.
One toast with me your glasses fill,
  Aye, fill them level with the brim,
De mortuis, nisi bonum, nil !
  The lights are growing dim.

DELILAH

FROM A PICTURE

The sun has gone down, spreading wide on
The sky-line one ray of red fire;
Prepare the soft cushions of Sidon,
Make ready the rich loom of Tyre.
The day, with its toil and its sorrow,
Its shade, and its sunshine, at length
Has ended; dost fear for the morrow,
Strong man, in the pride of thy strength?

Like fire-flies, heavenward clinging,
They multiply, star upon star;
And the breeze a low murmur is bringing
From the tents of my people afar.
Nay, frown not, I am but a Pagan,
Yet little for these things I care;
'Tis the hymn to our deity Dagon,
That comes with the pleasant night-air.

It shall not disturb thee, nor can it;
See, closed are the curtains, the lights
Gleam down on the cloven pomegranate,
Whose thirst-slaking nectar invites;
The red wine of Hebron glows brightly
In yon goblet—the draught of a king;

And through the silk awning steals lightly,
The sweet song my handmaidens sing.

Dost think that thy God, in His anger,
Will trifle with nature's great laws,
And slacken those sinews in languor
That battled so well in His cause?
Will he take back that strength He has given,
Because to the pleasures of youth
Thou yieldest? Nay, God-like, in heaven,
He laughs at such follies, forsooth.

Oh! were I, for good or for evil,
As great and as gifted as thou,
Neither God should restrain me, nor devil,
To none like a slave would I bow.
If fate must indeed overtake thee,
And feebleness come to thy clay,
Pause not till thy strength shall forsake thee,
Enjoy it the more in thy day.

Oh! fork't-tongue of adder, by her pent
In smooth lips!—oh, Sybarite blind!
Oh, woman, allied to the serpent!
Oh, beauty with venom combined,

Oh, might overcoming the mighty!
Oh, glory departing! oh, shame!
Oh, altar of false Aphrodite,
What strength is consumed in thy flame!

Strong chest, where her drapery rustles,
Strong limbs by her black tresses hid!
Not alone by the might of your muscles,
Yon lion was rent like a kid!
The valour from virtue that sunders,
Is 'reft of its nobler part;
And Lancelot's arm may work wonders,
But braver is Galahad's heart.

Sleep sound on that breast fair and ample;
Dull brain, and dim eyes, and deaf ears,
Feel not the cold touch on your temple,
Heed not the faint clash of the shears.
It comes!—with the gleam of the lamps on
The curtains—that voice—does it jar
On thy soul in the night-watch? Ho! Samson,
Upon thee the Philistines are.

LIGHTNING & TEMPEST

The spring-wind pass'd through the forest,
and whispered low in the leaves,
And the cedar toss'd her head, and the oak
stood firm in his pride;
The spring-wind pass'd through the town,
through the housetops, casements, and
eaves,
And whisper'd low in the hearts of the men,
and the men replied,
Singing—"Let us rejoice in the light
Of our glory, and beauty, and might;
Let us follow our own devices, and foster
our own desires.
As firm as our oaks in our pride, as our cedars
fair in our sight,
We stand like the trees of the forest that
brave the frosts and the fires."

The storm went forth to the forest, the plague
went forth to the town,
And the men fell down to the plague, as the
trees fell down to the gale;
And their bloom was a ghastly pallor, and
their smile was a ghastly frown,

And the song of their hearts was changed
to a wild, disconsolate wail,
Crying—"God! we have sinn'd, we have
sinn'd,
We are bruised, we are shorn, we are thinn'd,
Our strength is turn'd to derision, our pride
laid low in the dust,
Our cedars are cleft by Thy lightnings, our
oaks are strew'd by Thy wind,
And we fall on our faces seeking Thine aid,
though Thy wrath is just."

The troubles of life are many,
The pleasures of life are few;
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dream't that the skies were blue—
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dream't that the earth was green;
There is little colour, if any,
'Neath the sunlight now to be seen.

Then the rays of the sunset glinted
Through the blackwoods' emerald bough
On an emerald sward, rose-tinted,
And spangled, and gemm'd;—and now
The rays of the sunset redden
With a sullen and lurid frown,
From the skies that are dark and leaden
To earth that is dusk and brown.

To right and to left extended
The uplands are blank and drear,
And their neutral tints are blended
With the dead leaves sombre and sere;
The cold, grey mist from the still side
Of the lake creeps sluggish and sure,

Bare and bleak is the hill side,
Barren and bleak the moor.

Bright hues and shapes intertwisted,
Fair forms and rich colours ;—now
They have flown—if e'er they existed—
It matters not why or how,
It matters not where or when, dear,
They have flown, the blue and the green,
I thought on what might be then, dear,
Now I think on what might have been.

What might have been !—words of folly,
What might be !—speech for a fool ;
With mistletoe round me, and holly,
Scarlet and green, at Yule,
With the elm in the place of the wattle,
And in lieu of the gum, the oak,
Years back I believed a little,
And as I believed I spoke.

Have I done with those childish fancies ?
They suited the days gone by,
When I pulled the poppies and pansies,
When I hunted the butterfly,

With one who has long been sleeping,
A stranger to doubts and cares,
And to sowing that ends in reaping
Thistles and thorns, and tares.

What might be!—the dreams were scatter'd,
As chaff is toss'd by the wind,
The faith has been rudely shattered,
That listen'd with credence blind;
Things were to have been, and therefore
They were, and they are to be,
And will be;—we must prepare for
The doom we are bound to dree.

Ah, me! we believe in evil,
Where once we believed in good,
The world, the flesh, and the devil,
Are easily understood;
The world, the flesh, and the devil,
Their traces on earth are plain;
Must they always riot and revel
While footprints of man remain?

Talk about better and wiser,
Wiser and worse are one,

The sophist is the despiser
Of all things under the sun;
Is nothing real but confusion?
Is nothing certain but death?
Is nothing fair save illusion?
Is nothing good that has breath?

Some sprite, malignant and elfish,
Seems present, whispering close,
"All motives of life are selfish,
All instincts of life are gross,
And the song that the poet fashions,
And the love-bird's musical strain,
Are jumbles of animal passions,
Refined by animal pain."

The restless throbbings and burnings
That hope unsatisfied brings,
The weary longings and yearnings
For the mystical better things,
Are the sands on which is reflected
The pitiless moving lake,
Where the wanderer falls dejected,
By a thirst he never can slake.

A child blows bubbles that glitter,
He snatches them, they disperse;
Yet childhood's folly is better,
And manhood's folly is worse;
Gilt baubles we grasp at blindly
Would turn in our hands to dross;
'Tis a fate less cruel than kindly
Denies the gain and the loss.

And as one who pursues a shadow,
As one who hunts in a dream,
As the child who crosses the meadow,
Enticed by the rainbow's gleam,
I—knowing the course was foolish,
And guessing the goal was pain,
Stupid, and stubborn, and mulish—
Followed and follow again.

The sun over Gideon halted,
Holding aloof the night,
When Joshua's arm was exalted,
Yet never retraced his flight;
Nor will he turn back, nor can he,
He chases the future fast;
The future is blank—oh, Annie!
I fain would recall the past.

There are others toiling and straining
'Neath burdens graver than mine—
They are weary, yet uncomplaining—
I know it, yet I repine ;
I know it, how time will ravage,
How time will level, and yet
I long with a longing savage,
I regret with a fierce regret.

You are no false ideal,
Something is left of you,
Present, perceptible, real,
Palpable, tangible, true ;
One shred of your broken necklace,
One tress of your pale, gold hair,
And a heart so utterly reckless,
That the worst it would gladly dare.

There is little pleasure, if any,
In waking the past anew ;
My days and nights have been many ;
Lost chances many I rue—
My days and nights have been many ;
Now I pray that they be few,
When I think on the hill-side, Annie,
Where I dream't that the skies were blue.

ARS LONGA

A SONG OF PILGRIMAGE

Our hopes are wild imaginings,
  Our schemes are airy castles,
Yet these, on earth, are lords and kings,
  And we their slaves and vassals;
Your dream, forsooth, of buoyant youth,
  Most ready to deceive is,
But age will own the bitter truth,
  "*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

The hill of life with eager feet
  We climb'd in merry morning,
But on the downward track we meet
  The shades of twilight, warning;
The shadows gaunt they fall aslant;
  And those who scaled Ben Nevis,
Against the mole-hills toil and pant,
  "*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

The obstacles that barr'd our path
  We seldom quail'd to dash on
In youth, for youth one motto hath,
  "The will, the way must fashion."

Those words, I wot, blood thick and hot
Too ready to believe is,
But thin and cold our blood hath got,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

And "art is long," and "life is short,"
And man is slow at learning;
And yet by divers dealings taught,
For divers follies yearning,
He owns at last, with grief downcast
(For man disposed to grieve is)—
One adage old stands true and fast,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

We journey! manhood, youth, and age,
The matron, and the maiden,
Like pilgrims on a pilgrimage,
Loins girded, heavy laden:—
Each pilgrim strong, who joins our throng,
Most eager to achieve is,
Foredoom'd ere long to swell the song,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

At morn, with staff and sandal-shoon,
We travel brisk and cheery,

But some have laid them down ere noon,
And all at eve are weary;
The noontide glows with no repose,
And bitter chill the eve is,
The grasshopper a burden grows,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

The staff is snap't, the sandal fray'd,
The flint-stone galls and blisters,
Our brother's steps we cannot aid,
Ah, me! nor aid our sister's;
The pit prepares its hidden snares,
The rock prepared to cleave is,
We cry, in falling unawares,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

Oh! Wisdom, which we sought to win!
Oh! Strength, in which we trusted!
Oh! Glory, which we gloried in!
Oh! puppets we adjusted!
On barren land our seed is sand,
And torn the web we weave is,
The bruiséd reed hath pierced the hand,
"*Ars longa, vita brevis.*"

We, too, "Job's comforters" have met,
With steps, like ours, unsteady,
They could not help themselves, and yet
To judge us they were ready;
Life's path is trod at last, and God
More ready to reprieve is,
They know who rest beneath the sod,
"*Mors gratum, vita brevis.*"

THE LAST LEAP

All is over! fleet career,
  Dash of greyhound slipping thongs,
Flight of falcon, bound of deer,
Mad hoof-thunder in our rear,
  Cold air rushing up our lungs,
  Din of many tongues.

Once again, one struggle good,
  One vain effort;—he must dwell
Near the shifted post, that stood
Where the splinters of the wood,
  Lying in the torn tracks, tell
  How he struck and fell.

Crest where cold drops beaded cling,
  Small ear drooping, nostril full
Glazing to a scarlet ring,
Flanks and haunches quivering,
  Sinews stiff'ning, void and null,
  Dumb eyes sorrowful.

Satin coat that seems to shine
  Duller now, black braided tress
That a softer hand than mine

Far away was wont to twine,
That in meadows far from this
Softer lips might kiss.

'All is over! this is death,
And I stand to watch thee die,
Brave old horse; with 'bated breath
Hardly drawn through tight-clenched teeth,
Lip indented deep, but eye
Only dull and dry.

Musing on the husk and chaff
Gather'd where life's tares are sown,
Thus I speak, and force a laugh
That is half a sneer and half
An involuntary groan,
In a stifled tone—

"Rest, old friend! thy day, though rife
With its toil, hath ended soon;
We have had our share of strife,
Tumblers in the mask of life,
In the pantomime of noon
Clown and pantaloon.

THE LAST LEAP

"With a flash that ends thy pain,
Respite and oblivion blest
Come to greet thee. I in vain
Fall: I rise to fall again:
Thou hast fallen to thy rest—
And thy fall is best!"

QUARE FATIGASTI

Two years ago I was thinking
On the changes that years bring forth;
Now I stand where I then stood, drinking
The gust and the salt sea-froth;
And the shuddering wave strikes, linking
With the waves subsiding and sinking,
And clots the coast-herbage, shrinking,
With a hue of the white cere-cloth.

Is there ought worth losing or keeping?
The bitters or sweets men quaff?
The sowing or the doubtful reaping?
The harvest of grain or chaff?
Or squandering days or heaping,
Or waking seasons or sleeping,
The laughter that dries the weeping,
Or the weeping that drowns the laugh?

For joys wax dim and woes deaden,
We forget the sorrowful biers
And the garlands glad that have fled in
The merciful march of years;
And the sunny skies, and the leaden,
And the faces that pale or redden,
And the smiles that lovers are wed in
Who are born and buried in tears.

And the myrtle bloom turns hoary,
And the blush of the rose decays,
And sodden with sweat and glory
Are the hard-won laurels and bays;
We are neither joyous nor sorry
When time has ended our story,
And blotted out grief, and glory,
And the pain, and the pleasure, and the praise.

Weigh justly, through good and bad in
The scales, will the balance veer
With the joys or the sorrows had in
The sum of a life's career?
In the end, spite of dreams that sadden
The sad, or the sanguine madden,
There is nothing to grieve or gladden,
There is nothing to hope or fear.

"Thou hast gone astray," quoth the preacher,
"In the gall of thy bitterness,"
Thou hast taught me in vain, oh, teacher!
I neither blame thee nor bless;
If bitter is sure and sweet sure,

These vanish with form and feature,—
Can the creature fathom the creature
  Whose Creator is fathomless?

Is this dry land sure? is the sea sure?
  Is there ought that shall long remain,
Pain, or peril, or pleasure,
  Pleasure, or peril, or pain?
Shall we labour or take our leisure,
And who shall inherit treasure,
If the measure with which we measure
  Is meted to us again?

I am slow in learning, and swift in
  Forgetting, and I have grown
So weary with long sand sifting.
  T'wards the mist where the breakers moan
The rudderless barque is drifting
Through the shoals and the quicksands
      shifting—
In the end shall the night-wrack, lifting,
  Discover the shores unknown?

HIPPODROMANIA;

OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE

Part I

VISIONS IN THE SMOKE

Rest, and be thankful! On the verge
  Of the tall cliff, rugged and grey,
At whose granite base the breakers surge,
  And shiver their frothy spray,
Outstretched, I gaze on the eddying wreath
  That gathers and flits away,
With the surf beneath, and between my
      teeth
  The stem of the "ancient clay."

With the anodyne cloud on my listless
      eyes,
  With its spell on my dreamy brain,
As I watch the circling vapours rise
From the brown bowl up to the sullen skies,
  My vision becomes more plain,
Till a dim kaleidoscope succeeds
  Through the smoke-wrack drifting and
      veering,
Like ghostly riders on phantom steeds
  To a shadowy goal careering.

In their own generation the wise may sneer,
They hold our sports in derision;
Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer
Were allotted a graver vision.
Yet if man, of all the Creator plann'd,
His noblest work is reckoned,
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,
The horse may at least rank second.

Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,
Did they flinch from the battle's roar,
When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite,
By the echoing Black Sea shore?
On! on! to the cannon's mouth they stride,
With never a swerve nor a shy,
Oh! the minutes of yonder maddening ride
Long years of pleasure outvie!

No slave, but a comrade staunch, in this,
Is the horse, for he takes his share,
Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,
And in longing to do and dare.

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Where bullets whistle, and round shot whiz,
Hoofs trample, and blades flash bare,
God send me an ending as fair as his
Who died in his stirrups there!

The wind has slumbered throughout the day,
Now a fitful gust springs over the bay,
My wandering thoughts no longer stray,
I'll fix my overcoat buttons;
Secure my old hat as best I may
(And a shocking bad one it is, by the way),
Blow a denser cloud from my stunted clay,
And then, friend *Bell*, as the Frenchmen say,
We'll "go back again to our muttons."

There's a lull in the tumult on yonder hill,
And the clamour has grown less loud,
Though the Babel of tongues is never still,
With the presence of such a crowd.
The bell has rung. With their riders up
At the starting point they muster,
The racers strip't for the "Melbourne Cup,"
All gloss and polish and lustre;

And the course is seen, with its emerald sheen,
By the bright spring-tide renew'd,
Like a ribbon of green, stretched out between
The ranks of the multitude.

The flag is lowered. "They're off!" "They come!"
The squadron is sweeping on;
A sway in the crowd—a murmuring hum!
"They're here!" "They're past!" "They're gone!"
They came with the rush of the southern surf,
On the bar of the storm-girt bay;
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf
Their hoof-strokes echo away.

The rose and black draws clear of the ruck,
And the murmur swells to a roar,
As the brave old colours that never were struck
Are seen with the lead once more.
Though the feathery ferns and grasses wave
O'er the sod, where Lantern sleeps,
Though the turf is green on Fisherman's grave,
The stable its prestige keeps.

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Six lengths in front she scours along,
  She's bringing the field to trouble,
She's tailing them off, she's running strong,
  She shakes her head and pulls double.
Now Minstrel falters, and Exile flags,
  The Barb finds the pace too hot,
And Toryboy loiters, and Playboy lags,
  And the *bolt* of Ben Bolt is shot.

That she never may be caught this day,
  Is the worst that the public wish her.
She won't be caught ; she comes right away ;
  Hurrah for Seagull and Fisher !
See, Strop falls back, though his reins are slack,
  Sultana begins to tire,
And the top-weight tells on the Sydney crack,
  And the pace on "the Gippsland flyer."

The rowels, as round the turn they sweep,
  Just graze Tim Whiffler's flanks,
Like the hunted deer that flies through the
    sheep,
  He strides through the beaten ranks.
Daughter of Omen, prove your birth,

The colt will take lots of choking;
The hot breath steams at your saddle girth,
From his scarlet nostril smoking.

The shouts of the Ring for a space subside,
And slackens the bookmaker's roar;
Now, Davis, rally; now, Carter, ride,
As man never rode before.
When Sparrowhawk's backers cease to cheer,
When Yattendon's friends are dumb,
When hushed is the clamour of Volunteer—
Alone in the race they come!

They're neck and neck; they're head and head;
They're stroke for stroke in the running;
The whalebone whistles, the steel is red,
No shirking as yet nor shunning.
One effort, Seagull, the blood you boast
Should struggle when nerves are strained;—
With a rush on the post by a neck at the most,
The verdict for Tim is gained.

Tim Whiffler wins. Is blood alone
The *sine qua non* for a flyer?

HIPPODROMANIA ?

The breed of his dam is a myth unknown,
And we've doubts respecting his sire.
Yet few (if any) those proud names are
On the pages of peerage or stud,
In whose 'scutcheon lurks no sinister bar,
No taint of the base black blood.

Aye, Shorthouse, laugh—laugh loud and long,
For pedigree you're a sticker;
You may be right, I may be wrong,
Wiseacres both! Let's liquor.
Our common descent we may each recall
To a lady of old caught tripping,
The fair one in fig leaves, who d——d us all
For a bite at a golden pippin.

When first on this rocky ledge I lay,
There was scarce a ripple in yonder bay,
The air was serenely still;
Each column that sailed from my swarthy clay
Hung loitering long ere it passed away,
Though the skies wore a tinge of leaden grey,
And the atmosphere was chill.
But the red sun sank to its evening shroud,
Where the western billows are roll'd

Behind a curtain of sable cloud,
With a fringe of scarlet and gold;
There's a misty glare in the yellow moon,
And the drift is scudding fast,
There'll be storm and rattle, and tempest soon,
When the heavens are overcast.
The neutral tint of the sullen sea
Is fleck'd with the snowy foam,
And the distant gale sighs drearilie,
As the wanderer sighs for his home.
The white sea-horses toss their manes
On the bar of the southern reef,
And the breakers moan, and—by Jove, it rains
(I thought I should come to grief);
Though it can't well damage my shabby hat,
Though my coat looks best when it's damp,
Since the shaking I got (no matter where at),
I've a mortal dread of the cramp.
My matches are wet, my pipe's put out,
And the wind blows colder and stronger;
I'll be stiff, and sore, and sorry, no doubt,
If I lie here any longer.

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Part II

THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE

On the fields of Col'raine there'll be labour in vain
Before the Great Western is ended,
The nags will have toil'd, and the silks will be soil'd,
And the rails will require to be mended.

For the gullies are deep, and the uplands are steep,
And mud will of purls be the token,
And the tough stringy-bark, that invites us to lark,
With impunity may not be broken.

Though Ballarat's fast, and they say he can last,
And that may be granted hereafter,
Yet the judge's decision to the Border division
Will bring neither shouting nor laughter.

And Blueskin, I've heard that he goes like a bird,
And I'm told that to back him would pay me,

He's a good bit of stuff, but not quite good
enough,
"*Non licuit credere famæ.*"

Alfred ought to be there, we all of us swear
By the blood of King Alfred, his sire,
He's not the real jam, by the blood of his
dam,
So I shan't put him down as a flyer.

Now, Hynam, my boy, I wish you great joy,
I know that when fresh you can jump, sir;
But you'll scarce be in clover when you're
ridden all over,
And punish't from shoulder to rump, sir.

Archer goes like a shot, they can put on their
pot,
And boil it to cover expenses;
Their pot will boil over, the run of his Dover
He'll never earn over big fences.

There's a horse in the race, with a blaze on
his face,
And we know he can gallop a docker,

He's proved himself stout, of his speed there's
no doubt,
And his jumping's according to Cocker.

When Hynam's outstrip't, and when Alfred
is whip't,
To keep him in sight of the leaders,
While Blueskin runs true, but his backers
look blue,
For his rider's at work with the bleeders.

When his carcass of beef brings "the bullock"
to grief,
And the rush of the tartan is ended;
When Archer's in trouble—who's that pulling
double,
And taking his leaps unextended?

He wins all the way, and the rest—sweet,
they say,
Is the smell of the newly-turn'd plough,
friend,
But you smell it too close, when it stops eyes
and nose,
And you can't tell your horse from your cow,
friend.

Part III

CRÆDAT JUDÆUS APELLA

Dear Bell,—I enclose what you ask in a
letter,
A short rhyme at random, no more and no
less,
And you may insert it for want of a better,
Or leave it, it doesn't much matter, I guess;
And as for a tip, why, there isn't much in it,
I may hit the right nail, but first, I declare,
I haven't a notion what's going to win it
(The Champion, I mean), and what's more,
I don't care.
Imprimis, there's Cowra—few nags can go
quicker
Than she can—and Smith takes his oath
she can fly;
While Brown, Jones, and Robinson swear
she's a sticker,
But "*crædat Judæus Apella*," say I.

There's old Volunteer, I'd be sorry to sneer
At his chance; he'll be there, if he goes at
the rate

HIPPODROMANIA ?

He went at last year, when a customer queer,
Johnny Higgerson, fancied him lock'd in
the straight;
I've heard that the old horse has never been
fitter,
I've heard all performances past he'll outvie;
He may gallop a docker, and finish a splitter,
But "*crædat Judæus Apella*," say I.

I know what they say, sir, "The Hook" he
can stay, sir,
And stick to his work like a sleuth-hound
or beagle;
He stays "with a *hook*," and he sticks in the
clay, sir,
I'd rather, for choice, pop my money on
Seagull;
I'm told that the Sydney division will rue,
sir,
Their rashness in front of the stand when
they spy
With a clear lead the white jacket spotted
with blue, sir,
But "*crædat Judæus Apella*," say I.

There's The Barb—you may talk of your flyers and stayers,
All bosh—when he strips you can see his eye range
Round his rivals, with much the same look as Tom Sayers
Once wore, when he faced the big novice, Bill Bainge.
Like Stow, at our hustings, confronting the hisses
Of roughs, with his queer Mephistopheles' smile;
Like Baker or Baker's more wonderful *Mrs*,
The terror of blacks at the source of the Nile;
Like Triton 'mid minnows; like hawk among chickens;
Like—anything better than everything else;
He stands at the post. Now they're off! the plot thickens!
Quoth Stanley to Davis, "How is your pulse?"
He skims o'er the smooth turf, he scuds through the mire,
He waits with them, passes them, bids them good-bye!

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Two miles and three-quarters, cries Fligate,
" He'll tire."
Oh! "*crædat Judæus Apella*," say I.

Lest my tale should come true, let me give
you fair warning,
You may "shout" some cheroots, if you
like, no champagne
For this child.—"Oh! think of my head in
the morning,"
Old chap, you don't get me on that lay again.
The last time those games I look't likely to
try on,
Says Bradshawe, "You'll feel very sheepish
and shy
When you are haul'd up and caution'd by
D—g—y and L—n,"
Oh! "*crædat Judæus Apella*," say I.

This writing bad verses is very fatiguing,
The brain and the liver against it combine,
And nerves with digestion in concert are
leaguing,
To punish excess in the pen and ink line;

Already I feel just as if I'd been rowing
Hard all—on a supper of onions and tripe
(A thing I abhor), but my steam I've done blowing,
I am, my dear *Bell*, yours truly, "The Pipe."

P.S.—Tell J. P., if he fancies a good 'un,
That old chestnut pony of mine is for sale.
N.B.—His forelegs are uncommonly wooden,
I fancy the near one's beginning to fail,
And why shouldn't I do as W—n does oft,
And swear that a cripple is sound—on the Bible—
Hold hard! though the man I allude to is soft,
He's game to go in for an action of libel.

Part IV

BANKER'S DREAM

Of chases and courses dogs dream, so do horses—
Last night I was dozing and dreaming,
The crowd and the bustle were there, and the rustle
Of the silk in the autumn sky gleaming.

HIPPODROMANIA ?

The stand throng'd with faces, the broadcloth and laces,
The booths, and the tents, and the cars,
The bookmakers' jargon, for odds making bargain,
The nasty stale smell of cigars.

We form'd into line, 'neath the merry sunshine,
Near the logs at the end of the railing;
"Are you ready, boys? Go!" cried the starter, and low
Sank the flag, and away we went sailing.

In the van of the battle we heard the stones rattle,
Some slogging was done, but no slaughter,
A shout from the stand, and the whole of our band
Skimm'd merrily over the water.

Two fences we clear'd, and the roadway we near'd,
When three of our troop came to trouble;
Like a bird on the wing, or a stone from a sling,
Flew Cadger, first over the double.

And Western was there, head and tail in the air,
And Pondon was there too—what noodle
Could so name a horse? I should feel some remorse
If I gave such a name to a poodle.

In and out of the lane, to the racecourse again,
Craig's pony was first, I was third,
And Ingleside lit in my tracks, with the bit
In his teeth, and came up "like a bird."

In the van of the battle we heard the rails rattle,
Says he, "Though I don't care for shunning
My share of the raps, I shall look out for gaps,
When the light weight's away with the running."

At the fence just ahead, the outsider still led,
The chestnut play'd follow my leader,
Oh! the devil a gap, he went into it slap,
And he and his jock took a header.

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Says Ingleside, "Mate, should the pony go straight,
You've no time to stop or turn restive";
Says I, "Who means to stop? I shall go till I drop";
Says he, "Go it, old cuss, gay and festive."

The fence stiff and tall, just beyond the log wall,
We cross'd, and the walls, and the water,—
I took off too near, a small made fence to clear,
And just touched the grass with my snorter.

At the next post and rail up went Western's bang tail,
And down (by the very same token)
To earth went his nose, for the panel he chose
Stood firm and refused to be broken.

I dream't someone said that the bay would have made
The race safe, if he'd *stood* a while longer;
If he had,—but, like if, there the panel stands stiff—
He stood, but the panel stood stronger.

In and out of the road, with a clear lead still
show'd
The violet fluted with amber;
Says Johnson, "Old man, catch him now if
you can,
'Tis the second time round you'll remember."

At the road once again, pulling hard on the
rein,
Craig's pony pop't in and pop't out;
I followed like smoke and the pace was no joke,
For his friends were beginning to shout.

And Ingleside came to my side, strong and
game,
And once he appear'd to outstrip me,
But I felt the steel gore, and I shot to the
fore,
Only Cadger seem'd likely to whip me.

In the van of the battle I heard the logs rattle,
His stroke never seem'd to diminish,
And thrice I drew near him, and thrice he
drew clear,
For the weight served him well at the finish.

BANKER'S DREAM

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Ha! Cadger goes down, see, he stands on
his crown—
Those rails take a power of clouting—
A long sliding blunder—he's up—well, I
wonder
If now it's all over but shouting.

All loosely he's striding, the amateur's riding
All loosely, some reverie lock'd in
Of a "vision in smoke," or a "wayfaring
bloke,"
His poetical rubbish concocting.

Now comes from afar the faint cry, "Here
they are,"
"The violet winning with ease,"
"Fred goes up like a shot," "Does he catch
him or not?"
Level money, I'll take the cerise.

To his haunches I spring, and my muzzle I
bring
To his flank, to his girth, to his shoulder;
Through the shouting and yelling I hear my
name swelling,
The hearts of my backers grow bolder.

Neck and neck! head and head! staring eye!
nostril spread!
Girth and stifle laid close to the ground!
Stride for stride! stroke for stroke! through
one hurdle we've broke!
On the splinters we've lit with one bound.

And "Banker for choice" is the cry, and one
voice
Screams "Six to four once upon Banker";
"Banker wins," "Banker's beat," "Cadger
wins," "A dead heat"—
"Ha! there goes Fred's whalebone a
flanker."

Springs the whip with a crack! nine stone
ten on his back,
Fit and light he can race like the devil;
I draw past him—'tis vain; he draws past me
again,
Springs the whip! and again we are level.

Steel and cord do their worst, now my head
struggles first!
That tug my last spurt has expended—

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Nose to nose! lip to lip! from the sound of
the whip
He strains to the utmost extended.

How they swim through the air, as we roll to
the chair,
Stand, faces, and railings flit past;
Now I spring . . .
from my lair, with a snort
and a stare,
Rous'd by Fred with my supper at last.

Part V

EX FUMO DARE LUCEM

'twixt the cup and the lip

PROLOGUE

Calm and clear! the bright day is declining,
The crystal expanse of the bay,
Like a shield of pure metal, lies shining
'Twixt headlands of purple and grey,
While the little waves leap in the sunset,
And strike with a miniature shock,
In sportive and infantine onset,
The base of the iron-stone rock.

Calm and clear! the sea-breezes are laden
With a fragrance, a freshness, a power,
With a song like the song of a maiden,
With a scent like the scent of a flower;
And a whisper, half weird, half prophetic,
Comes home with the sigh of the surf;—
But I pause, for your fancies poetic
Never rise from the level of "Turf."

Fellow-bungler of mine, fellow-sinner,
In public performances past,
In trials whence touts take their winner,
In rumours that circulate fast,
In strains from Prunella or Priam,
Staying stayers, or goers that go,
You're much better posted than I am,
'Tis little I care, less I know.

Alas! neither poet nor prophet
Am I, though a jingler of rhymes—
'Tis a hobby of mine, and I'm off it
At times, and I'm on it at times;
And whether I'm off it or on it,
Your readers my counsels will shun,

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Since I scarce know Van Tromp from Blue
Bonnet,
Though I might know Cigar from the Nun.

With "visions" you ought to be sated
And sicken'd by this time, I swear
That mine are all myths, self-created,
Air visions that vanish in air;
If I had some loose coins I might chuck one,
To settle this question and say,
"Here goes! this is tails for the black one,
And heads for my fav'rite, the bay."

And must I rob Paul to pay Peter,
Or Peter defraud to pay Paul?
My rhymes, are they stale? if my metre
Is varied, one chime rings through all;
One chime—though I sing more or sing less,
I have but one string to my lute,
And it might have been better if, stringless
And songless, the same had been mute.

Yet not as a seer of visions,
Nor yet as a dreamer of dreams,
I send you these partial decisions
On hackney'd, impoverish'd themes,

But with song out of tune, sung to pass time,
Flung heedless to friends or to foes,
Where the false notes that ring for the last time
May blend with some real ones, who knows?

THE RACE

On the hill they are crowding together,
In the stand they are crushing for room,
Like midge-flies they swarm on the heather,
They gather like bees on the broom;
They flutter like moths round a candle—
Stale similes, granted, what then?
I've got a stale subject to handle,
A very stale stump of a pen.

Hark! the shuffle of feet that are many,
Of voices the many-tongued clang—
"Has he had a bad night?" "Has he any
Friends left?"—How I hate your turf slang!
'Tis stale to begin with, not witty,
But dull and inclined to be coarse,
But bad men can't use (more's the pity)
Good words when they slate a good horse.

Heu! heu! quantus equis (that's Latin
For "bellows to mend" with the weeds),

HIPPODROMANIA ?

They're off! lights and shades! silk and satin!
A rainbow of riders and steeds!
And one shows in front, and another
Goes up and is seen in his place,
Sic transit (more Latin)—Oh! bother,
Let's get to the end of the race.

. . . . .

See, they come round the last turn careering,
Already Tait's colours are struck,
And the green in the vanguard is steering,
And the red's in the rear of the ruck!
Are the stripes in the shade doom'd to lie long?
Do the blue stars on white skies wax dim?
Is it Tamworth or Smuggler? 'Tis Bylong
That wins—either Bylong or Tim.

As the shell through the breach that is riven
And sapp'd by the springing of mines,
As the bolt from the thunder-cloud driven,
That levels the larches and pines,
Through yon mass parti-colour'd that dashes
Goal-turn'd, clad in many-hued garb,
From rear to van, surges and flashes
The yellow and black of The Barb.

Past The Fly, falling back on the right, and
The Gull, giving way on the left,
Past Tamworth, who feels the whip smite, and
Whose sides by the rowels are cleft;
Where Tim and the chestnut together
Still bear of the battle the brunt,
As if eight stone twelve were a feather
He comes with a rush to the front.

Tim Whiffler may yet prove a Tartar,
And Bylong's the horse that can stay,
But Kean is in trouble—and Carter
Is hard on the satin-skinn'd bay;
And The Barb comes away unextended,
Hard held, like a second Eclipse,
While behind, the hoof-thunder is blended
With the whistling and crackling of whips.

EPILOGUE

He wins; yes, he wins upon paper,
He hasn't yet won upon turf,
And these rhymes are but moonshine and
vapour,
Air-bubbles and spume from the surf.
So be it, at least they are given
Free, gratis, for just what they're worth,

And (whatever there may be in heaven)
There's little worth much upon earth.

When, with satellites round them, the centre
Of all eyes, hard press'd by the crowd,
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter
The gate, 'mid a shout long and loud,
You may feel as you might feel, just landed
Full length on the grass from the clip
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,
Or upper-cut, whizzing from hip.

And that's not so bad if you're pick'd up
Discreetly, and carefully nursed ;
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon lick'd up,
And next time you *may* get home first.
Still I'm not sure you'd like it exactly,
(Such tastes as a rule are acquired),
And you'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions ?
Forgive me, I speak as I feel,
I've ponder'd and made my conclusions—
As the mill grinds the corn to the meal ;

So man striving boldly but blindly,
Ground piecemeal in Destiny's mill,
At his best, taking punishment kindly,
Is only a chopping-block still.

Are we wise? our abstruse calculations
Are based on experience long;
Are we sanguine? our high expectations
Are founded on hope that is strong;
Thus we build an air-castle that crumbles
And drifts, till no traces remain,
And the fool builds again while he grumbles,
And the wise one laughs, building again.

"How came they to pass, these rash blunders,
These false steps so hard to defend?"
Our friend puts the question and wonders,
We laugh and reply, "Ah! my friend,
Could you trace the first stride falsely taken,
The distance misjudged, where or how,
When you pick'd yourself up, stunn'd and shaken,
At the fence 'twixt the turf and the plough?

"In the jar of the panel rebounding!
In the crash of the splintering wood!

HIPPODROMANIA ?

In the ears to the earth shock resounding!
  In the eyes flashing fire and blood!
In the quarters above you revolving!
  In the sods underneath heaving high!
There was little to aid you in solving
  Such questions—the how or the why.

"And destiny, steadfast in trifles,
  Is steadfast for better or worse
In great things, it crushes and stifles,
  And swallows the hopes that we nurse.
Men wiser than we are may wonder,
  When the future they cling to so fast,
To the roll of that destiny's thunder,
  Goes down with the wrecks of the past."

. . . . .

The past! the dead past! that has swallow'd
  All the honey of life and the milk,
Brighter dreams than mere pastimes we've
      follow'd,
  Better things than our scarlet or silk;
Aye, and worse things—that past is it really
  Dead to us who again and again
Feel sharply, hear plainly, see clearly
  Past days with their joy and their pain?

Like corpses embalm'd and unburied
They lie, and in spite of our will,
Our souls on the wings of thought carried,
Revisit their sepulchres still;
Down the channels of mystery gliding
They conjure strange tales, rarely read,
Of the priests of dead Pharaohs presiding
At mystical feasts of the dead.

Weird pictures arise, quaint devices,
Rude emblems, baked funeral meats,
Strong incense, rare wines, and rich spices,
The ashes, the shrouds, and the sheets;
Does our thraldom fall short of completeness
For the magic of a charnel-house charm,
And the flavour of a poisonous sweetness,
And the odour of a poisonous balm?

And the links of the past—but, no matter,
For I'm getting beyond you, I guess,
And you'll call me "as mad as a hatter"
If my thoughts I too freely express;
I subjoin a quotation, pray learn it,
And with the aid of your lexicon tell us
The meaning thereof, "*Res discernit*
Sapiens, quas confundit asellus."

HIPPODROMANIA ?

Already green hillocks are swelling,
And combing white locks on the bar,
Where a dull, droning murmur is telling
Of winds that have gather'd afar;
Thus we know not the day, nor the morrow,
Nor yet what the night may bring forth,
Nor the storm, nor the sleep, nor the sorrow,
Nor the strife, nor the rest, nor the wrath.

Yet the skies are still tranquil and starlit,
The sun 'twixt the wave and the west
Dies in purple, and crimson, and scarlet,
And gold; let us hope for the best,
Since again from the earth his effulgence
The darkness and damp-dews shall wipe,
Kind reader, extend your indulgence
To this the last lay of "The Pipe."

ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

OR THE

LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER

"You have the Pyrrhic dance, as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?"—BYRON.

ONE line of swart profiles, and bearded lips dressing,
One ridge of bright helmets, one crest of fair plumes,
One streak of blue sword-blades all bared for the fleshing,
One row of red nostrils that scent battle-fumes.

Forward! the trumpets were sounding the charge,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
That music, like wild-fire spreading at large,
Madden'd the war-horse as well as the man.

Forward! still forward! we thunder'd along,
Steadily, yet, for our strength we were nursing;

ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

Tall Ewart, our sergeant, was humming a
song,
Lance-corporal Black Will was blaspheming
and cursing.

Open'd their volley of guns on our right,
Puffs of grey smoke, veiling gleams of red
flame,
Curling to leeward, were seen on the height
Where the batteries were posted, as onward
we came.

Spreading before us their cavalry lay,
Squadron on squadron, troop upon troop;
We were so few, and so many were they—
Eagles wait calmly the sparrow-hawk's
stoop.

Forward! still forward! steed answering steed
Cheerily neigh'd, while the foam flakes
were toss't
From bridle to bridle—the top of our speed
Was gain'd, but the pride of our order was
lost.

One was there, leading by nearly a rood,
Though we were racing he kept to the fore,
Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,
High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crash't,
Loudly his helm right in front of us rung;
Iron hoofs thunder'd, and naked steel flash't
Over him—youngest, where many were young.

Now we were close to them, every horse striding
Madly;—St Luce pass't with never a groan;—
Sadly my master look't round—he was riding
On the boy's right, with a line of his own.

Thrusting his hand in his breast or breast-pocket,
While from his wrist the sword swung by a chain,
Swiftly he drew out some trinket or locket,
Kiss't it (I think) and replaced it again.

Burst, while his fingers reclosed on the haft,
  Jarring concussion and earth-shaking din,
Horse 'counter'd horse, and I reel'd, but he
    laugh't,
  Down went his man, cloven clean to the
    chin!

Wedged in the midst of that struggling mass,
  After the first shock, where each his foe
    singled,
Little was seen save a dazzle, like glass
  In the sun, with grey smoke and black dust
    intermingled.

Here and there redden'd a pistol shot, flashing
  Through the red sparkle of steel upon steel!
Redder the spark seem'd, and louder the
    clashing,
  Struck from the helm by the iron-shod heel!

Overfallen riders, like wither'd leaves strewing
  Uplands in autumn, we sunder'd their ranks;
Steeds rearing and plunging, men hacking
    and hewing,
  Fierce grinding of sword-blades, sharp
    goading of flanks.

Short was the crisis of conflict soon over,
Being too good (I suppose) to last long;
Through them we cut, as the scythe cuts the clover,
Batter'd and stain'd we emerged from their throng.

Some of our saddles were emptied, of course;
To heaven (or elsewhere) Black Will had been carried!
Ned Sullivan mounted Will's riderless horse,
His mare being hurt, while ten seconds we tarried.

And then we re-formed, and went at them once more,
And ere they had rightly closed up the old track,
We broke through the lane we had open'd before,
And as we went forward e'en so we came back.

Our numbers were few, and our loss far from small,
They could fight, and besides, they were twenty to one;

We were clear of them all when we heard the
recall,
And thus we returned, but my tale is not
done.

For the hand of my rider felt strange on my
bit,
He breathed once or twice like one partially
choked,
And sway'd in his seat, then I knew he was
hit ;—
He must have bled fast, for my withers
were soak'd,

And scarcely an inch of my housing was dry ;
I slacken'd my speed, yet I never quite stop't,
Ere he patted my neck, said, "Old fellow,
good-bye!"
And drop't off me gently, and lay where he
drop't!

Ah, me! after all they may call us dumb
creatures,—
I tried hard to neigh, but the sobs took my
breath,

Yet I guess't, gazing down at those still, quiet features,
He was never more happy in life than in death.

. . . . .

Two years back, at Aldershot, Elrington mentioned
My name to our colonel one field-day. He said,
"Count," "Steeltrap" and "Challenger" ought to be pension'd;—
"Count" died the same week, and now "Steeltrap" is dead.

That morning our colonel was riding "Theresa,"
The filly by "Teddington," out of "Mistake,"
His girls, pretty Alice and fair-hair'd Louisa,
Were there on the ponies he purchased from Blake.

I remember he pointed me out to his daughters,
Said he, "In this troop I may fairly take pride,

But I've none left like him in my officers'
quarters,
Whose life-blood the mane of old 'Chal-
lenger' dyed."

Where are they? the war-steeds who shared
in our glory,
The "Lanercost" colt, and the "Acrobat"
mare,
And the Irish division, "Kate Kearney" and
"Rory,"
And rushing "Roscommon," and eager
"Kildare,"

And "Freeny," a favourite once with my
master,
And "Warlock," a sluggard, but honest
and true,
And "Tancred," as honest as "Warlock,"
but faster,
And "Blacklock," and "Birdlime," and
"Molly Carew"?—

All vanish't, what wonder! twelve summers have pass't
Since then, and my comrade lies buried this day,—
Old "Steeltrap," the kicker,—and now I'm the last
Of the chargers who shared in that glorious fray

. . . . .

Come, "Harlequin," keep your nose out of my manger,
You'll get your allowance, my boy, and no more;
Snort! "Silvertail," snort! when you've seen as much danger
As I have, you won't mind the rats in the straw.

. . . . .

Our gallant old colonel came limping and halting,
The day before yesterday, into my stall,
Oh! light to the saddle I've once seen him vaulting,
In full marching order, steel broadsword, and all.

And now, his left leg than his right is made shorter
Three inches, he stoops, and his chest is unsound ;
He spoke to me gently, and patted my quarter,
I laid my ears back and look't playfully round.

For that word kindly meant, that caress kindly given,
I thank't him, though dumb, but my cheerfulness fled ;
More sadness I drew from the face of the living
Than years back I did from the face of the dead.

For the dead face, upturn'd, tranquil, joyous, and fearless,
Look't straight from green sod to blue fathomless sky
With a smile ; but the living face, gloomy and tearless,
And haggard and harass'd, look't down with a sigh.

Did he think on the first time he kiss't Lady
Mary?
On the morning he wing'd Horace Greville
the beau?
On the winner he steer'd in the grand
militáry?
On the charge that he headed twelve long
years ago?

Did he think on each fresh year, of fresh
grief the herald?
On lids that are sunken, and locks that are
grey?
On Alice, who bolted with Brian Fitzgerald?
On Rupert, his first-born, dishonour'd by
"play"?

On Louey, his darling, who sleeps 'neath the
cypress
That shades her and one whose last breath
gave her life?—
I saw those strong fingers hard over each eye
press—
Oh! the dead rest in peace when the quick
toil in strife!

. . . . .

Scoff, man! egotistical, proud, unobservant,
Since I with man's grief dare to sympathise thus;
Why scoff?—fellow-creature I am, fellow-servant
Of God, can man fathom God's dealings with us?

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
Than that which parts you from some being more blest;
And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
Than ever your shallow philosophy guess't.

You are proud of your power, and vain of your courage,
And your blood, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Celt,
Though your gifts you extol, and our gifts you disparage,
Your perils, your pleasures, your sorrows we've felt.

We, too, sprung from mares of the prophet
of Mecca,
And nursed on the pride that was born with
the milk,
And filtered through "Crucifix," "Beeswing,"
" Rebecca,"
We love sheen of scarlet and shimmer of
silk.

We, too, sprung from loins of the Ishmaelite
stallions,
We glory in daring that dies or prevails;
From counter of squadrons, and crash of
battalions,
To rending of blackthorns, and rattle of rails.

In all strife where courage is tested, and power,
From the meet on the hill-side, the horn-
blast, the find,
The burst, the long gallop that seems to devour
The champaign, all obstacles flinging behind.

To the cheer and the clarion, the war-music
blended
With war-cry, the furious dash at the foe,

ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

The terrible shock, the recoil, and the splendid
Bare sword, flashing blue, rising red from
the blow.

I've borne *one* through perils where many
have seen us,
No tyrant, a kind friend, a patient instructor,
And I've felt some strange element flashing
between us,
Till the saddle seem'd turn'd to a lightning
conductor.

Did he see? could he feel through the faint-
ness, the numbness,
While linger'd the spirit half-loosed from
the clay,
Dumb eyes seeking his in their piteous
dumbness,
Dumb quivering nostrils, too stricken to
neigh?

And what then? the colours reversed, the
drums muffled,
The black nodding plumes, the dead march,
and the pall,

The stern faces, soldier-like, silent, unruffled,
The slow sacred music that floats over all!

Cross carbine and boarspear, hang bugle and banner,
Spur, sabre, and snaffle, and helm—Is it well?
Vain 'scutcheon, false trophies of Mars and Diana,—
Can the dead laurel sprout with the live *immortelle*?

It may be,—we follow, and though we inherit
Our strength for a season, our pride for a span,
Say! vanity are they? vexation of spirit?
Not so, since they serve for a time horse and man.

They serve for a time, and they make life worth living,
In spite of life's troubles—'tis vain to despond;

ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

Oh, man! *we* at least, *we* enjoy, with thanks-
giving,
God's gifts on this earth, though we look
not beyond.

You sin, and *you* suffer, and we, too, find
sorrow,
Perchance through *your* sin—yet it soon
will be o'er;
We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,
Strong horse and bold rider!—and *who*
knoweth more?

. . . . .

In our barrack-square shouted Drill-sergeant
McCluskie,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
The colonel wheel'd short, speaking once, dry
and husky,
"Would to God I had died with your
master, old man."

BUSH BALLADS & GALLOPING RHYMES By LINDSAY GORDON

A DEDICATION

TO THE AUTHOR OF "HOLMBY HOUSE"

THEY are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
And songless bright birds;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable Summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,
And faint flocks and herds.

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,
And all winds are warm,
Wild Winter's large floodgates are loosen'd,
And floods, free'd by storm
From broken up fountain heads, dash on
Dry deserts with long pent up passion—
Here rhyme was first framed without fashion,
Song shaped without form.

Whence gather'd?—The locust's glad chirrup
May furnish a stave;
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,
The wash of a wave.

The chaunt of the marsh frog in rushes,
That chimes through the pauses and hushes
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,
The tempests that rave.

In the deep'ning of dawn, when it dapples
The dusk of the sky,
With streaks like the redd'ning of apples,
The ripening of rye.
To eastward, when cluster by cluster,
Dim stars and dull planets, that muster,
Wax wan in a world of white lustre
That spreads far and high.

In the gathering of night gloom o'erhead, in
The still silent change,
All fire-flush'd when forest trees redden
On slopes of the range.
When the gnarl'd, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,
With curious device—quaint inscription,
And hieroglyph strange.

In the Spring, when the wattle gold trembles
'Twixt shadow and shine,

THE SICK STOCKRIDRR

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run
of hoofs:
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

A DEDICATION

When each dew-laden air draught resembles
A long draught of wine;
When the skyline's blue burnish'd resistance
Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,
Some song in all hearts hath existence,—
Such songs have been mine.

They came in all guises, some vivid
To clasp and to keep;
Some sudden and swift as the livid
Blue thunder-flame's leap.
This swept through the first breath of clover,
With memories renew'd to the rover—
That flash'd while the black horse turn'd over
Before the long sleep.

To you (having cunning to colour
A page with your pen,
That through dull days, and nights even duller,
Long years ago ten;
Fair pictures in fever afforded)—
I send these rude staves, roughly worded
By one in whose brain stands recorded
As clear now as then.

"The great rush of grey 'Northern water,'
The green ridge of bank,
The 'sorrel' with curved sweep of quarter
Curl'd close to clean flank,
The Royalist saddlefast squarely,
And, where the bright uplands stretch fairly,
Behind, beyond pistol-shot barely,
The Roundheaded rank.

"A long launch, with clinging of muscles,
And clenching of teeth!
The loose doublet ripples and rustles!
The swirl shoots beneath!"
Enough. In return for your garland—
In lieu of the flowers from your far land—
Take wild growths of dreamland or starland,
Take weeds for your wreath.

Yet rhyme had not fail'd me for reason,
Nor reason for rhyme;
Sweet song! had I sought you in season,
And found you in time.
You beckon in your bright beauty yonder,
And I, waxing fainter yet fonder,
Now weary too soon when I wander—
Now fall when I climb.

A DEDICATION

It matters but little in the long run,
The weak have some right—
Some share in the race that the strong run,
The fight the strong fight.
If words that are worthless go westward,
Yet the worst word shall be as the best word,
In the day when all riot sweeps restward,
In darkness or light.

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

HOLD hard, Ned! Lift me down once more, and lay me in the shade.
Old man, you've had your work cut out to guide
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I sway'd
All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.

The dawn at "Moorabinda" was a mist-wrack dull and dense,
The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp;
I was dozing in the gateway at Arbuthnot's bound'ry fence,
I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.

We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply through the haze,
And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth;
To southward lay "Katâwa," with the sand-peaks all ablaze,
And the flush'd fields of Glen Lomond lay to north.

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

Now westward winds the bridle path that
leads to Lindisfarm,
And yonder looms the double-headed
Bluff;
From the far side of the first hill, when the
skies are clear and calm,
You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair
enough.

Five miles we used to call it from our home-
stead to the place
Where the big tree spans the roadway like
an arch;
'Twas here we ran the dingo down that gave
us such a chase
Eight years ago—or was it nine?—last
March.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the
gleaming grass,
To wander as we've wander'd many a
mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch
the white wreaths pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods when we spied the station roofs,
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs;
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Aye! we had a glorious gallop after "Starlight" and his gang,
When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat;
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-strewn ranges rang
To the strokes of "Mountaineer" and "Acrobat"!
Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across the heath,
Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dash'd;
And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled underneath!
And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crash'd!

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

We led the hunt throughout, Ned, on the
chestnut and the grey,
And the troopers were three hundred yards
behind,
While we emptied our six-shooters on the
bushrangers at bay,
In the creek with stunted box-tree for a
blind!
There you grappl'd with the leader, man to
man and horse to horse,
And you roll'd together when the chestnut
rear'd;
He blazed away and missed you in that shallow
watercourse—
A narrow shave—his powder singed your
beard!

In these hours when life is ebbing, how those
days when life was young
Come back to us; how clearly I recall
Even the yarns Jack Hall invented, and the
songs Jem Roper sung!
And where are now Jem Roper and Jack
Hall?

Aye! nearly all our comrades of the old
colonial school,
Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are
gone;
Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reck-
less as a rule,
It seems that you and I are left alone.

There was Hughes, who got in trouble through
that business with the cards,
It matters little what became of him;
But a steer ripp'd up MacPherson in the Coora-
minta yards,
And Sullivan was drown'd at Sink-or-swim;
And Mostyn—poor Frank Mostyn—died at
last a fearful wreck,
In "the horrors" at the Upper Wandinong,
And Carisbrooke the rider at the Horsefall
broke his neck,
Faith! the wonder was he saved his neck
so long!

Ah! those days and nights we squandered at
the Logans' in the Glen—
The Logans, man and wife, have long been
dead.

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little
Elsie then;
And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done
my share of toil,
And life is short—the longest life a
span;
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the
oil,
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart
of man.
For good undone and gifts misspent and
resolutions vain,
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I
know—
I should live the same life over, if I had to live
again;
And the chances are I go where most men
go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky and the tall
green trees grow dim,
The sward beneath me seems to heave and
fall;

And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy
sunlight swim,
And on the very sun's face weave their pall.
Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle
blossoms wave,
With never stone or rail to fence my bed;
Should the sturdy station children pull the
bush flowers on my grave,
I may chance to hear them romping over-
head.

THE SWIMMER

With short, sharp, violent lights made vivid,
To the southward far as the sight can roam;
Only the swirl of the surges livid,
The seas that climb and the surfs that comb.
Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,
And waifs wreck'd seaward and wasted shoreward
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.

A grim, grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—
Where the batter'd hull and the broken mast lie,
They have lain embedded these long years ten.
Love! when we wander'd here together,
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,
From the heights and hollows of fern and heather,
God surely loved us a little then.

Then skies were fairer and shores were
firmer—
The blue sea over the bright sand roll'd;
Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur,
Sheen of silver and glamour of gold—
And the sunset bath'd in the gulf to lend her
A garland of pinks and of purples tender,
A tinge of the sun-god's rosy splendour,
A tithe of his glories manifold.

Man's works are graven, cunning and skilful
On earth where his tabernacles are;
But the sea is wanton, the sea is wilful,
And who shall mend her and who shall mar?
Shall we carve success or record disaster
On her bosom of heaving alabaster?
Will her purple pulse beat fainter or faster
For fallen sparrow or fallen star?

I would that with sleepy soft embraces
The sea would fold me—would find me rest
In luminous shades of her secret places,
In depths where her marvels are manifest;
So the earth beneath her should not discover

THE SWIMMER

My hidden couch—nor the heaven above
her—
As a strong love shielding a weary lover,
I would have her shield me with shining
breast.

When light in the realms of space lay hidden,
When life was yet in the womb of time,
Ere flesh was fettered to fruits forbidden,
And souls were wedded to care and crime,
Was the course foreshaped for the future
spirit—
A burden of folly, a void of merit—
That would fain the wisdom of stars inherit,
And cannot fathom the seas sublime?

Under the sea or the soil (what matter?
The sea and the soil are under the sun),
As in the former days in the latter
The sleeping or waking is known of none.
Surely the sleeper shall not awaken
To griefs forgotten or joys forsaken,
For the price of all things given and taken,
The sum of all things done and undone.

Shall we count offences or coin excuses,
Or weigh with scales the soul of a man,
Whom a strong hand binds and a sure hand looses,
Whose light is a spark and his life a span?
The seed he sow'd or the soil he cumber'd,
The time he served or the space he slumber'd;
Will it profit a man when his days are number'd,
Or his deeds since the days of his life began?

One, glad because of the light, saith, "Shall not
The righteous Judge of all the earth do right,
For behold the sparrows on the house-tops fall not
Save as seemeth to Him good in His sight?"
And this man's joy shall have no abiding
Through lights departing and lives dividing,
He is soon as one in the darkness hiding,
One loving darkness rather than light.

A little season of love and laughter,
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,

And a horror of outer darkness after,
And dust returneth to dust again.
Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,
And the lover of light shall join the hater,
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,
And no one knoweth the loss or gain.

Love of my life! we had lights in season—
Hard to part from, harder to keep—
We had strength to labour and souls to reason,
And seed to scatter and fruits to reap.
Though time estranges and fate disperses,
We have *had* our loves and our loving-mercies;
Though the gifts of the light in the end are curses,
Yet bides the gift of the darkness—sleep!

See! girt with tempest and wing'd with thunder,
And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,
The strong winds treading the swift waves sunder
The flying rollers with frothy feet.
One gleam like a bloodshot swordblade swims on

The skyline, staining the green gulf crimson,
A death stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun
That strikes through his stormy winding sheet.

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop
In your hollow backs, on your high arch'd manes.
I would ride as never a man has ridden
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,
To gulfs foreshadow'd through straits forbidden,
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

FROM THE WRECK

And faster and faster across the wide heath
We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,
And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—

FROM THE WRECK

"Turn out, boys"—"What's up with our
super' to-night?
The man's mad—Two hours to daybreak
I'd swear—
Stark mad—why, there isn't a glimmer of
light."
"Take Bolingbroke, Alec, give Jack the
young mare;
Look sharp. A large vessel lies jamm'd on the
reef,
And many on board still, and some wash'd
on shore,
Ride straight with the news—they may send
some relief
From the township; and we—we can do
little more.
You, Alec, you know the near cuts; you can
cross
The 'Sugarloaf' ford with a scramble, I think;
Don't spare the blood filly, nor yet the black
horse;
Should the wind rise, God help them! the
ship will soon sink.
Old Peter's away down the paddock, to drive
The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can—

A life and death matter; so, lads, look alive,"
Half-dress'd, in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,
Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon;
"Be quick with these buckles, we've no time to waste";
"Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to some tune."
"Make sure of the crossing-place; strike the old track,
They've fenced off the new one; look out for the holes
On the wombat hills." "Down with the slip rails; stand back."
"And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your souls."

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,
In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak grew,
Between the tall gumtrees we gallop'd away—

We crash'd through a brush fence, we splash'd through a swamp—
We steered for the north near "the Eagle-hawk's Nest"—
We bore to the left, just beyond "the Red Camp,"
And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the west—
We cross'd a low range sickly scented with musk
From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,
And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light,
And full on our left flash'd "the reedy lagoon,"
And sharply "the Sugarloaf" rear'd on our right.
A smother'd curse broke through the bush-man's brown beard,
He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek

Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, "Just what
I fear'd;
Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the
creek."

Black Bolingbroke snorted, and stood on the
brink
One instant, then deep in the dark, sluggish
swirl
Plunged headlong. I saw the horse suddenly
sink,
Till round the man's armpits the wave seem'd
to curl.
We follow'd,—one cold shock, and deeper we
sank
Than they did, and twice tried the landing
in vain.
The third struggle won it, straight up the steep
bank
We stagger'd, then out on the skirts of the
plain.

The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got
The lead, and had kept it throughout; 'twas
his boast

That through thickest of scrub he could steer
like a shot,
And the black horse was counted the best
on the coast.
The mare had been awkward enough in the
dark,
She was eager and headstrong, and barely
half broke;
She had had me too close to a big stringybark,
And had made a near thing of a crooked
she-oak;
But now on the open, lit up by the morn,
She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril
to neck,
And chased him—I hatless, with shirtsleeves
all torn
(For he may ride ragged who rides from a
wreck)—
And faster and faster across the wide heath
We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her
head,
And she—stretching out with the bit in her
teeth—
She caught him, outpaced him, and passed
him, and led.

We neared the new fence; we were wide of the track;
I look'd right and left—she had never been tried
At a stiff leap. 'Twas little he cared on the black.
"You're more than a mile from the gateway," he cried.
I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs
(In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap);
She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her sharp ears,
She flung it behind her with hardly a rap—
I saw the post quiver where Boling broke struck,
And guessed that the pace we had come the last mile
Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).
We galloped more steadily then for a while.

The heath was soon pass'd, in the dim distance lay
The mountain. The sun was just clearing the tips

Of the ranges to eastward. The mare—could
she stay?
She was bred very nearly as clean as Eclipse;
She led, and as oft as he came to her side,
She took the bit free and untiring as yet,
Her neck was arched double, her nostrils were
wide,
And the tips of her tapering ears nearly
met—
"You're lighter than I am," said Alec at last,
"The horse is dead beat and the mare isn't
blown.
She must be a good one—ride on and ride fast,
You know your way now." So I rode on alone.

Still galloping forward we pass'd the two flocks
At M'Intyre's hut and M'Allister's hill—
She was galloping strong at the Warrigal
Rocks—
On the Wallaby Range she was galloping
still—
And over the wasteland and under the wood,
By down and by dale, and by fell and by flat,
She gallop'd, and here in the stirrups I stood
To ease her, and there in the saddle I sat

To steer her. We suddenly struck the red
loam
Of the track near the troughs—then she
reeled on the rise—
From her crest to her croup covered over with
foam,
And blood-red her nostrils and bloodshot
her eyes,
A dip in the dell where the wattlefire bloomed—
A bend round a bank that had shut out the
view—
Large framed in the mild light the mountain
had loom'd,
With a tall, purple peak bursting out from
the blue.

I pull'd her together, I press'd her, and she
Shot down the decline to the Company's
yard,
And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee
I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-
flaps hard.
Yet a mile and another, and now we were near
The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted
past,

And 'twixt the two fences I turn'd with a cheer,
For a green, grass-fed mare 'twas a far thing and fast;
And labourers, roused by her galloping hoofs,
Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed;
And shone the white walls and the slate-coloured roofs
Of the township. I steadied her then—I had need—
Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new church—
Since chapels to churches have changed in that town).
A short, sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,
A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.
I slipp'd off the bridle, I slackened the girth,
I ran on and left her and told them my news;
I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth?
How much for her hide? She had never worn shoes.

NO NAME

"A stone upon her heart and head,
But no name written on that stone;
Sweet neighbours whisper low instead,
This sinner was a loving one."—MRS BROWNING.

'Tis a nameless stone that stands at your head—
The gusts in the gloomy gorges whirl,
Brown leaves and red till they cover your bed—
Now I trust that your sleep is a sound one, girl!

I said in my wrath, when his shadow cross'd
From your garden gate to your cottage door,
"What does it matter for one soul lost?
Millions of souls have been lost before."

Yet I warn'd you—ah! but my words came true—
"Perhaps some day you will find him out."
He who was not worthy to loosen your shoe,
Does his conscience therefore prick him?
I doubt.

You laugh'd and were deaf to my warning voice—
Blush'd and were blind to his cloven hoof—

NO NAME

You have had your chance, you have taken
your choice—
How could I help you, standing aloof?

He has prosper'd well with the world—he
says
I am mad—if so, and if he be sane,
I, at least, give God thanksgiving and praise
That there lies between us one difference
plain.

. . . . .

You in your beauty above me bent
In the pause of a wild west country ball—
Spoke to me—touched me without intent—
Made me your servant for once and all.

Light laughter rippled your rose-red lip,
And you swept my cheek with a shining curl
That stray'd from your shoulder's snowy tip—
Now I pray that your sleep is a sound one,
girl!

From a long way off to look at your charms
Made my blood run redder in every vein,
And he—he has held you long in his arms,
And has kiss'd you over and over again.

Is it well that he keeps well out of my way?
If we met, he and I—we alone—we two—
Would I give him one moment's grace to pray?
Not I, for the sake of the soul he slew.

A life like a shuttlecock may be toss'd
With the hand of fate for a battledore;
But it matters much, for your sweet soul lost,
As much as a million souls and more.

And I know that if, here or there, alone,
I found him, fairly and face to face,
Having slain his body, I would slay my own,
That my soul to Satan his soul might chase.

He hardens his heart in the public way—
Who am I? I am but a nameless churl;
But God will put all things straight someday—
Till then may your sleep be a sound one,
girl!

WOLF AND HOUND

"The hills like giants at a hunting lay
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay."—BROWNING.

You'll take my tale with a little salt,
But it needs none, nevertheless,
I was foil'd completely, fairly at fault,
Dishearten'd, too, I confess.
At the splitter's tent I had seen the track
Of horse-hoofs fresh on the sward,
And though Darby Lynch and Donovan Jack
(Who could swear through a ten-inch board)
Solemnly swore he had not been there,
I was just as sure that they lied,
For to Darby all that is foul was fair,
And Jack for his life was tried.

We had run him for seven miles and more
As hard as our nags could split;
At the start they were all too weary and sore,
And his was quite fresh and fit.
Young Marsden's pony had had enough
On the plain, where the chase was hot;
We breasted the swell of the Bittern's Bluff,
And Mark couldn't raise a trot.
When the sea, like a splendid silver shield,

To the south-west suddenly lay
On the brow of the Beetle, the chestnut reel'd,
And I bid good-bye to M'Crea—
And I was alone when the mare fell lame,
With a pointed flint in her shoe,
On the Stony Flats: I had lost the game,
And what was a man to do?—

I turned away with no fixed intent
And headed for Hawthorndell;
I could neither eat in the splitter's tent
Nor drink at the splitter's well;
I knew that they gloried in my mishap,
And I cursed them between my teeth—
A blood-red sunset through Brayton's Gap
Flung a lurid fire on the heath.

Could I reach the Dell? I had little reck,
And with scarce a choice of my own
I threw the reins on Miladi's neck—
I had freed her foot from the stone.
That season most of the swamps were dry,
And after so hard a burst
In the sultry noon of so hot a sky
She was keen to appease her thirst—

Or by instinct urged or impelled by fate—
I care not to solve these things—
Certain it is that she took me straight
To the Warrigal water springs.

I can shut my eyes and recall the ground
As though it were yesterday—
With a shelf of the low, grey rocks girt round
The springs in their basin lay;
Woods to the east and wolds to the north
In the sundown suddenly bloom'd;
Dead black on a curtain of crimson cloth
Large peaks to the westward loomed.
I led Miladi through weed and sedge,
She leisurely drank her fill;
There was something close to the water's edge,
And my heart with one leap stood still,
For a horse's shoe and a rider's boot
Had left clean prints on the clay;
Someone had watered his beast on foot,
'Twas he—he had gone. Which way?
Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,
As I turned and fronted the rocks;
So, at last, I had pressed the wolf to his lair,
I had run to his earth the fox.

I thought so. Perhaps he was resting. Perhaps
He was waiting, watching for me.
I examined all my revolver caps,
I hitched my mare to a tree—
I had sworn to have him, alive or dead,
And to give him a chance was loth.
He knew his life had been forfeited—
He had even heard of my oath.
In my stocking'd soles to the shelf I crept,
I crawl'd safe into the cave—
All silent—if he was there he slept.
Not there. All dark as the grave.

Through the crack I could hear the leaden hiss;
See the livid face through the flame!
How strange it seems that a man should miss
When his life depends on his aim!
There couldn't have been a better light
For him, nor a worse for me.
We were coop'd up, caged, like beasts for a fight,
And dumb as dumb beasts were we.

WOLF AND HOUND

'Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair.

WOLF AND HOUND

Flash! flash! bang! bang! and we blazed
away,
And the grey roof reddened and rang;
Flash! flash! and I felt his bullet flay
The tip of my ear. Flash! bang!
Bang! flash! and my pistol arm fell broke;
I struck with my left hand then—
Struck at a corpse through a cloud of smoke—
I had shot him dead in his den!

DE TE

A BURNING glass of burnish'd brass,
The calm sea caught the noontide rays,
And sunny slopes of golden grass
And wastes of weed-flower seem to blaze.
Beyond the shining silver-greys,
Beyond the shades of denser bloom,
The sky-line girt with glowing haze
The farthest, faintest forest gloom,
And the everlasting hills that loom.

We heard the hound beneath the mound,
We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh—
We had not sought for that we found—
He lay as dead men only lie,
With wan cheek whitening in the sky
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.
The dumb brute that had seen him die,
Close crouching, howl'd beside the head,
Brute burial service o'er the dead.

The brow was rife with seams of strife—
A lawless death made doubly plain

The ravage of a reckless life;
  The havoc of a hurricane
Of passions through that breadth of brain,
  Like headlong horses that had run
Riot, regardless of the rein—
  "Madman, he might have lived and done
  Better than most men," whisper'd one.

The beams and blots that Heaven allots
  To every life with life begin.
Fool! would you change the leopard's
      spots,
  Or blanch the Ethiopian's skin?
What more could he have hoped to win,
  What better things have thought to gain,
So shapen—so conceived in sin?
  No life is wholly void and vain,
  Just and unjust share sun and rain.

Were new life sent and life misspent
  Wiped out (if such to God seem'd good),
Would he (being as he was) repent,
  Or could he, even if he would,
Who heeded not things understood
  (Though dimly) even in savage lands

By some who worship stone or wood,
Or bird or beast, or who stretch hands
Sunward on shining Eastern sands?

And crime has cause. Nay, never pause
Idly to feel a pulseless wrist,
Brace up the massive square-shaped jaws,
Unclench the stubborn, stiff'ning fist,
And close those eyes through film and mist,
That kept the old defiant glare;
And answer, wise Psychologist,
Whose science claims some little share
Of truth, What better things lay there?

Aye! thought and mind were there,—some kind
Of faculty that men mistake
For talent when their wits are blind,—
An aptitude to mar and break
What others diligently make.
This was the worst and best of him—
Wise with the cunning of the snake,
Brave with the she-wolf's courage grim,
Dying hard and dumb, torn limb from limb.

And you, Brown, you're a doctor; cure
You can't, but you can kill, and he—
"*Witness his mark,*" he signed last year,
And now he signs John Smith, J.P.
We'll hold our inquest *now*, we three;
I'll be your coroner for once;
I think old Oswald ought to be
Our foreman—Jones is such a dunce,—
There's more brain in the bloodhound's sconce.

No man may shirk the allotted work,
The deed to do, the death to die;
At least I think so,—neither Turk,
Nor Jew, nor infidel am I,—
And yet I wonder when I try
To solve one question, may or must,
And shall I solve it by-and-bye,
Beyond the dark, beneath the dust?
I trust so, and I only trust.

Aye what they will, such trifles kill.
Comrade, for one good deed of yours,
Your history shall not help to fill
The mouths of many brainless boors.

It may be death absolves or cures
  The sin of life. 'Twere hazardous
To assert so. If the sin endures,
  Say only, "God who has judged him thus,
  Be merciful to him, and us."

BUSH BALLADS AND GALLOPING RHYMES HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

A LAY OF THE LOAMSHIRE HUNT CUP

"Aye, squire," said Stevens, "they back him at evens;
The race is all over, bar shouting, they say;
The Clown ought to beat her; Dick Neville is sweeter
Than ever—he swears he can win all the way.

"A gentleman rider—well, I'm an outsider,
But if he's a gent who the mischief's a jock?
You swells mostly blunder, Dick rides for the plunder,
He rides, too, like thunder—he sits like a rock.

"He calls 'hunted fairly' a horse that has barely
Been stripp'd for a trot within sight of the hounds,
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick,
And gave Abdelkader at Aintree nine pounds.

"They say we have no test to warrant a protest;
Dick rides for a lord and stands in with a steward;
The light of their faces they show him—his case is
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

"But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,
She strides in her work clean away from The Drag,
You hold her and sit her, she couldn't be fitter,
Whenever you hit her she'll spring like a stag.

"And p'rhaps the green jacket, at odds though they back it,
May fall, or there's no knowing what may turn up.
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,
Keep cool; and I think you may just win the Cup."

Dark-brown with tan muzzle, just stripped for the tussle,
Stood Iseult, arching her neck to the curb,

WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

A lean head and fiery, strong quarters and wiry,
A loin rather light, but a shoulder superb.

Some parting injunction, bestow'd with great unction,
I tried to recall, but forgot like a dunce,
When Reginald Murray, full tilt on White Surrey,
Came down in a hurry to start us at once.

" Keep back in the yellow! Come up on Othello!
Hold hard on the chestnut! Turn round on The Drag!
Keep back there on Spartan! Back you, sir, in tartan!
So, steady there, easy," and down went the flag.

We started, and Kerr made strong running on Mermaid,
Through furrows that led to the first stake-and-bound,

The crack half extended look'd bloodlike and splendid,
Held wide on the right where the headland was sound.

I pulled hard to baffle her rush with the snaffle,
Before her two-thirds of the field got away,
All through the wet pasture where floods of the last year
Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay.

The fourth fence, a wattle, floor'd Monk and Bluebottle;
The Drag came to grief at the blackthorn and ditch,
The rails toppled over Redoubt and Red Rover,
The lane stopped Lycurgus and Leicestershire Witch.

She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow,
And Mantrap and Mermaid refused the stone wall;

WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

And Giles on The Greyling came down at
the paling,
And I was left sailing in front of them all.

I took them a burster, nor eased her nor
nursed her
Until the black Bullfinch led into the
plough,
And through the strong bramble we bored
with a scramble—
My cap was knock'd off by the hazel-tree
bough.

Where furrows looked lighter I drew the rein
tighter—
Her dark chest all dappled with flakes of
white foam,
Her flanks mud-bespattered, a weak rail she
shattered—
We landed on turf with our heads turn'd
for home.

Then crash'd a low binder, and then close
behind her
The sward to the strokes of the favourite
shook,

His rush roused her mettle, yet ever so little
She shorten'd her stride as we raced at the brook.

She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter,
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee,
Between sky and water The Clown came and caught her,
The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

And forcing the running, discarding all cunning,
A length to the front went the rider in green;
A long strip of stubble, and then the big double,
Two stiff flights of rails with a quickset between.

She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit,

WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit.

A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping—
The last—we diverged round the base of the hill,
His path was the nearer, his leap was the clearer,
I flogg'd up the straight and he led sitting still.

She came to his quarter, and on still I brought her,
And up to his girth, to his breast-plate she drew,
A short prayer from Neville just reach'd me, "The Devil,"
He mutter'd—lock'd level the hurdles we flew.

A hum of hoarse cheering, a dense crowd careering,
All sights seen obscurely, all shouts vaguely heard,

"The green wins!" "The crimson!" The
multitude swims on,
And figures are blended and features are
blurr'd.

"The horse is her master!" "The green
forges past her!"
"The Clown will outlast her!" "The
Clown wins!" "The Clown!"
The white railing races with all the white faces,
The chestnut outpaces, outstretches the
brown.

On still past the gateway she strains in the
straightway,
Still struggles, "The Clown by a short neck
at most,"
He swerves, the green scourges, the stand
rocks and surges,
And flashes, and verges, and flits the white
post.

Aye! so ends the tussle,—I knew the tan
muzzle
Was first, though the ring-men were yelling
"Dead heat!"

WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

A nose I can swear by, but Clarke said "The
mare by
A short head." And that's how the
favourite was beat.

FRAGMENTARY SCENES
FROM
THE ROAD TO AVERNUS
AN UNPUBLISHED DRAMATIC LYRIC

Scene I
"DISCONTENT"

LAURENCE RABY

Laurence:

I said to young Allan M'Ilveray,
Beside the swift swirls of the North,
When, in lilac shot through with a silver ray,
We haul'd the strong salmon fish forth,
Said only, "He gave us some trouble
To land him, and what does he weigh?
Our friend has caught one that weighs double,
The game for the candle won't pay
Us to-day.
We may tie up our rods and away."

I said to old Norman M'Gregor,
Three leagues to the west of Glen Dhu—
I had drawn, with a touch of the trigger,
The best *bead* that ever I drew—
Said merely, "For birds in the stubble
I once had an eye—I could swear

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit.

He's down—but he's not worth the trouble
  Of seeking. You once shot a bear
                In his lair—
  'Tis only a buck that lies there."

I said to Lord Charles only last year,
  The time that we topp'd the oak rail
Between Wharton's plough and Whynne's
      pasture,
  And clear'd the big brook in Blakes-
      vale—
We only—at Warburton's double
  He fell, then I finish'd the run
And kill'd clean—said, "So bursts a bubble
  That shone half an hour in the sun—
                What is won?
  Your sire clear'd and captured a gun."

I said to myself, in true sorrow,
  I said yestere'en, "A fair prize
Is won, and it may be to-morrow
  'Twill not seem so fair in thine eyes—
Real life is a race through sore trouble,
  That gains not an inch on the goal,

And bliss an intangible bubble
That cheats an unsatisfied soul,
And the whole
Of the rest an illegible scroll."

Scene VII "TWO EXHORTATIONS"

A Shooting-box in the West of Ireland. A Bedchamber. Laurence Raby *and* Melchior. *Night.*

Melchior:

Surely, in the great beginning God made all things good, and still
That soul-sickness men call sinning enter'd not without His will.
Nay, our wisest have asserted that, as shade enhances light,
Evil is but good perverted, wrong is but the foil of right.
Banish sickness, then you banish joy for health to all that live;
Slay all sin, all good must vanish, good being but comparative.
Sophistry, you say—yet listen: look you skyward, there 'tis known

Worlds on worlds in myriads glisten—larger,
lovelier than our own—
This has been, and this shall still be, here as
there, in sun or star;
These things are to be and will be, those things
were to be and are.
Man in man's imperfect nature is by imperfec-
tion taught:
Add one cubit to your stature if you can by
taking thought.

Laurence:
Thus you would not teach that peasant, though
he calls you "father."

Melchior: True,
I should magnify this present, mystify that
future, too—
We adapt our conversation always to our
hearer's light.

Laurence:
I am not of your persuasion.

Melchior:
Yet the difference is but slight.

Laurence:

I, *even I*, say, "He who barters worldly weal
for heavenly worth
He does well"—your saints and martyrs
were examples, here on earth.

Melchior:

Aye, in earlier Christian ages, while the
heathen empire stood,
When the war 'twixt saints and sages cried
aloud for saintly blood.
Christ was then their model truly. Now, if
all were meek and pure,
Save the ungodly and the unruly, would the
Christian Church endure?
Shall the toiler or the fighter dream by day
and watch by night,
Turn the left cheek to the smiter, smitten
rudely on the right?
Strong men must encounter bad men—so-
called saints of latter days
Have been mostly pious madmen, lusting
after righteous praise—
Or the thralls of superstition, doubtless worthy
some reward,

Since they came by their condition hardly of
their free accord.
'Tis but madness, sad and solemn, that these
fakir-Christians feel—
Saint Stylites on his column gratified a morbid
zeal.

Laurence:

By your showing, good is really on a par (of
worth) with ill.

Melchior:

Nay, I said not so; I merely tell you both
some ends fulfil—
Priestly vows were my vocation, fast and vigil
wait for me.
You must work and face temptation. Never
should the strong man flee,
Though God wills the inclination with the
soul at war to be. (*Pauses.*)
In the strife 'twixt flesh and spirit, while you
can the spirit aid.
Should you fall, not less your merit, be not
for a fall afraid.
Whatsoe'er most right, most fit is you shall
do. When all is done

Chant the noble *Nunc Dimittis—Benedicimur*, my son. [*Exit* MELCHIOR.

Laurence (*alone*):

Why do I provoke these wrangles? Melchior talks (as well he may)
With the tongues of men and angels.
(*Takes up a pamphlet.*) What has this man got to say?
(*Reads.*) *Sic sacerdos fatur* (*ejus nomen quondam erat Burgo*).
Mala mens est, caro pejus, anima infirma, ergo I nunc, ora, sine mora—orat etiam Sancta Virgo.
(*Thinks.*)
(*Speaks.*) So it seems they mean to make her wed the usurer, Nathan Lee.
Poor Estelle! her friends forsake her; what has this to do with me?
Glad I am, at least, that Helen still refuses to discard
Her, through tales false gossips tell in spite or heedlessness.—'Tis hard!—
Lee, the Levite!—some few years back Herbert horsewhipp'd him—the cur

Show'd his teeth and laid his ears back.
Now his wealth has purchased her.
Must his baseness mar her brightness? Shall
the callous, cunning churl
Revel in the rosy whiteness of that golden-
headed girl?
(*Thinks and smokes.*)
(*Reads.*) *Cito certe venit vitæ finis* (*sic*
sacerdos fatur),
Nunc audite omnes, ite, vobis fabula narratur,
Nunc orate et laudate, laudat etiam Alma Mater.
(*Muses.*) Such has been, and such shall still
be, here as there, in sun or star.
These things are to be and will be, those
things were to be and are.
If I thought that speech worth heeding I
should—— Nay, it seems to me
More like Satan's special pleading than like
Gloria Domine.
(*Lies down on his couch.*)
(*Reads.*) *Et tu quoque, frater meus, facta*
mala quod fecisti
Denique confundit Deus omnes res quas te tegisti.
Nunc si unquam, nunc aut nunquam, sanguine
adjuro Christi.

Scene IX "IN THE GARDEN"

Aylmer's Garden, near the Lake. Laurence Raby *and* Estelle.

He:

Come to the bank where the boat is moor'd
to the willow-tree low;
Bertha, the baby, won't notice, Brian, the
blockhead, won't know.

She:

Bertha is not such a baby, sir, as you seem to
suppose;
Brian, a blockhead he may be—more than you
think for, he knows.

He:

This much, at least, of your brother, from the
beginning he knew
Somewhat concerning that other made such
a fool of by you.

She:

Firmer those bonds were and faster, Frank
was my spaniel, my slave,
You! you would fain be my master; mark
you! the difference is grave.

He:

Call me your spaniel, your starling, take me
and treat me as these,
I would be anything, darling! aye, whatsoever
you please.
Brian and Basil are "punting," leave them
their dice and their wine,
Bertha is butterfly hunting, surely one hour
shall be mine.
See, I have done with all duty; see, I can
dare all disgrace,
Only to look at your beauty, feasting my eyes
on your face.

She:

Look at me, aye, till your eyes ache! How,
let me ask, will it end;
Neither for your sake nor my sake, but for
the sake of my friend?

He:

Is she your friend, then? I own it, this is all
wrong, and the rest,
Frustra sed anima monet, caro quod fortius est.

She:

Not quite so close, Laurence Raby, not with
your arm round my waist;

Something to look at I may be, nothing to
touch or to taste.

He:

Wilful as ever and wayward; why did you
tempt me, Estelle?

She:

You misinterpret each stray word, you for
each inch take an ell.

Lightly all laws and ties trammel me, I am
warn'd for all that.

He (aside):

Perhaps she will swallow her camel when she
has strain'd at her gnat.

She:

Therefore take thought and consider, weigh
well, as I do, the whole,

You for mere beauty a bidder, say, would you
barter a soul?

He:

Girl! *that may* happen, but *this is*; after this
welcome the worst,

Blest for one hour by your kisses, let me be
evermore curs'd.

Talk not of ties to me reckless, here every
tie I discard—
Make me your girdle, your necklace—

She: Laurence, you kiss me too hard.

He:
Aye, 'tis the road to Avernus, *n'est-ce pas vrai donc, ma belle?*
There let them bind us or burn us, *mais le jeu vaut la chandelle.*
Am I your lord or your vassal? Are you my sun or my torch?
You, when I look at you, dazzle, yet when I touch you you scorch.

She:
Yonder are Brian and Basil, watching us fools from the porch.

Scene X "AFTER THE QUARREL"

Laurence Raby's Chamber. Laurence *enters, a little the worse for liquor.*

Laurence:
He never gave me a chance to speak,
And he call'd her—worse than a dog—

The girl stood up with a crimson cheek,
And I fell'd him there like a log.

I can feel the blow on my knuckles yet—
He feels it more on his brow.
In a thousand years we shall all forget
The things that trouble us now.

Scene XI "TEN PACES OFF"

An Open Country. Laurence Raby *and* Forrest, Brian Aylmer *and* Prescot.

Forrest:

I've won the two tosses from Prescot;
Now hear me, and hearken and heed,
And pull that vile flower from your waistcoat,
And throw down that beast of a weed;
I'm going to give you the signal
I gave Harry Hunt at Boulogne,
The morning he met Major Bignell,
And shot him dead as a stone;
For he must look round on his right hand
To watch the white flutter—that stops

His aim, for it takes off his sight, and
I cough while the handkerchief drops.
And you keep both eyes on his figure,
Old fellow, and don't take them off.
You've got the sawhandled hair trigger—
You sight him and shoot when I cough.

Laurence (*aside*) :
Though God will never forgive me,
Though men make light of my name,
Though my sin and my shame outlive me,
I shall not outlast my shame.
The coward, does he mean to miss me?
His right hand shakes like a leaf;
Shall I live for my friends to hiss me,
Of fools and of knaves the chief?
Shall I live for my foes to twit me?
He has master'd his nerve again—
He is firm, he will surely hit me—
Will he reach the heart or the brain?
One long look eastward and northward—
One prayer—"Our Father which art"—
And the cough chimes in with the fourth word,
And I shoot skyward—the heart.

LAST SCENE — "EXEUNT"

HELEN RABY

Where the grave-deeps rot, where the grave-dews rust,
They dug, crying, "Earth to earth"—
Crying, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust"—
And what are my poor prayers worth?
Upon whom shall I call, or in whom shall I trust,
Though death were indeed new birth?

And they bid me be glad for my baby's sake,
That she suffer'd sinless and young—
Would they have me be glad when my breasts still ache
Where that small, soft, sweet mouth clung?
I am glad that the heart will so surely break
That has been so bitterly wrung.

He was false, they tell me, and what if he were?
I can only shudder and pray,
Pouring out my soul in a passionate prayer
For the soul that he cast away;

THE ROAD TO AVERNUS

Was there nothing that once was created fair
In the potter's perishing clay?

Is it well for the sinner that souls endure?
For the sinless soul is it well?
Does the pure child lisp to the angels pure?
And where does the strong man dwell,
If the sad assurance of priests be sure,
Or the tale that our preachers tell?

The unclean has follow'd the undefiled,
And the ill *may* regain the good,
And the man *may* be even as the little child!
We are children lost in the wood—
Lord! lead us out of this tangled wild,
Where the wise and the prudent have been beguiled,
And only the babes have stood.

DOUBTFUL DREAMS

Aye, snows are rife in December,
And sheaves are in August, yet,
And you would have me remember,
And I would rather forget;
In the bloom of the May-day weather,
In the blight of October chill,
We were dreamers of old together,—
As of old, are you dreaming still?

For nothing on earth is sadder
Than the dream that cheated the grasp,
The flower that turned to the adder,
The fruit that changed to the asp;
When the day-spring in darkness closes,
As the sunset fades from the hills,
With the fragrance of perish'd roses,
With the music of parch'd-up rills.

When the sands on the sea-shore nourish
Red clover and yellow corn;
When figs on the thistle flourish,
And grapes grow thick on the thorn;
When the dead branch, blighted and blasted,
Puts forth green leaves in the spring;

Then the dream that life has outlasted
Dead comfort to life may bring.

I have changed the soil and the season,
But whether skies freeze or flame,
The soil they flame on or freeze on
Is changed in little save name;
The loadstone points to the nor'ward,
The river runs to the sea;
And you would have me look forward,
And backward I fain would flee.

I remember the bright spring garlands,
The gold that spangled the green,
And the purple on fairy far lands,
And the white and the red bloom, seen
From the spot where we last lay dreaming
Together—yourself and I—
The soft grass beneath us gleaming,
Above us the great grave sky.

And we spoke thus, "Though we have trodden
Rough paths in our boyish years;
And some with our sweat are sodden,
And some are salt with our tears;

Though we stumble still, walking blindly,
Our paths shall be made all straight;
We are weak, but the heavens are kindly,
The skies are compassionate."

Is the clime of the old land younger,
Where the young dreams longer are nursed?
With the old insatiable hunger,
With the old unquenchable thirst,
Are you longing, as in the old years
We have longed so often in vain;
Fellow-toilers still, fellow-soldiers,
Though the seas have sundered us twain?

But the young dreams surely have faded,
Young dreams—old dreams of young days—
Shall the new dream vex us as they did?
Or as things worth censure or praise?
Real toil is ours, real trouble,
Dim dreams of pleasure and pride;
Let the dreams disperse like a bubble,
So the toil like a dream subside.

Vain toil! men better and braver
Rose early and rested late,

Whose burdens than ours were graver,
  And sterner than ours their hate.
What fair reward had Achilles?
  What rest could Alcides win?
Vain toil! "Consider the lilies,
  They toil not, neither do spin."

Nor for mortal toiling nor spinning,
  Will the matters of mortals mend;
As it was so in the beginning
  It shall be so in the end.
The web that the weavers weave ill
  Shall not be woven aright,
Till the good is brought forth from evil
  As day is brought forth from night.

Vain dreams! for our fathers cherished
  High hopes in the days that were;
And these men wonder'd and perish'd,
  Nor better than these we fare;
And our due at least is their due,
  They fought against odds and fell;
"*En avant, les enfants perdus!*"
  We fight against odds as well.

The skies! Will the great skies care for
  Our footsteps, straighten our path,
Or strengthen our weakness? Wherefore?
  We have rather incurr'd their wrath;
When against the Captain of Hazor
  The stars in their courses fought,
Did the sky shed merciful rays, or
  With love was the sunshine fraught?

Can they favour man? Can they wrong man?
  The unapproachable skies?
Though these gave strength to the strong man,
  And wisdom gave to the wise?
When strength is turn'd to derision,
  And wisdom brought to dismay,
Shall we wake from a troubled vision
  Or rest from a toilsome day?

Nay! I cannot tell. Peradventure
  Our very toil is a dream,
And the works that we praise or censure
  It may be, they only seem.
If so, I would fain awaken
  Or sleep more soundly than so,
Or by dreamless sleep overtaken
  The dream I would vain forego.

DOUBTFUL DREAMS

For the great things of earth are small things,
  The longest life is a span,
And there is an end to all things,
  A season to every man,
Whose glory is dust and ashes,
  Whose spirit is but a spark,
That out from the darkness flashes,
  And flickers out in the dark.

We remember the pangs that wrung us
  When some went down to the pit,
Who faded as leaves among us,
  Who flitted as shadows flit;
What visions under the stone lie?
  What dreams in the shroud sleep dwell?
For we saw the earth pit only,
  And we heard only the knell.

We know not whether they slumber
  Who waken on earth no more,
As the stars of the heights in number,
  As sands on the deep sea-shore.
Shall stiffness bind them, and starkness
  Enthral them, by field and flood,
Till "the sun shall be turn'd to darkness,
  And the moon shall be turn'd to blood"?

We know not!—worse may enthral men—
"The wages of sin are death,"
And so death pass'd upon all men;
For sin was born with man's breath.
Then the labourer spent with sinning,
His hire with his life shall spend,
For it was so in the beginning,
And shall be so in the end.

There is life in the blacken'd ember
While a spark is smouldering yet;
In a dream, e'en now I remember
That dream I had lief forget.
I had lief forget, I had e'en lief
That dream with *this* doubt should die—
"*If we did these things in the green leaf,*
What shall be done in the dry?"

RHYME OF JOYOUS GUARD

THROUGH the lattice rushes the south wind, dense
With fumes of the flowery frankincense
From hawthorn blossoming thickly;
And gold is shower'd on grass unshorn,
And poppy-fire on shuddering corn,
With Maydew flooded and flush'd with morn,
And scented with sweetness sickly.

The bloom and brilliance of summer days,
The buds that brighten, the fields that blaze,
The fruits that ripen and redden,
And all the gifts of a God-sent light
Are sadder things in my shameful sight
Than the blackest gloom of the bitterest night,
When the senses darken and deaden.

For the days recall what the nights efface,
Scenes of glory and seasons of grace,
For which there is no returning—
Else the days were even as the nights to me,
Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree,
And to-morrow the barren trunk may be
Cut down—cast forth for the burning.

Would God I had died the death that day
When the Bishop blessed us before the fray
At the shrine of the Saviour's Mother;
We buckled the spur, we braced the belt,
Arthur and I—together we knelt,
And the grasp of his kingly hand I felt
As the grasp of an only brother.

The Body and Blood of Christ we shared,
Knees bended and heads bow'd down and bared,
We listened throughout the praying.
Eftsoon the shock of the foe we bore
Shoulder to shoulder on Severn's shore,
Till our hilts were glued to our hands with gore,
And our sinews slacken'd with slaying.

Was I far from Thy Kingdom, gracious Lord,
With a shattered casque and a shiver'd sword,
On the threshold of Mary's chapel?
Pardie! I had well-nigh won that crown
Which endureth more than a knight's renown,
When the pagan giant had got me down
Sore spent in the deadly grapple.

May his craven spirit find little grace,
He was seal'd to Satan in any case,
Yet the loser had been the winner;
Had I wax'd fainter or he less faint,
Then my soul was free from this loathsome taint,
I had died as a Christian knight—no saint
Perchance, yet a pardon'd sinner.

But I strove full grimly beneath his weight,
I clung to his poignard desperate,
I baffled the thrust that followed,
And writhing uppermost rose, to deal,
With bare three inches of broken steel,
One stroke—Ha! the headpiece crash'd piecemeal,
And the knave in his black blood wallow'd.

So I lived for worse—in fulness of time,
When peace for a season swayed the clime,
And spears for a space were idle;
Trusted and chosen of all the court,
A favoured herald of fair report,
I travell'd eastward, and duly brought
A bride to a queenly bridal.

Pardie! 'twas a morning even as this,
(The skies were warmer if aught, I wis,
Albeit the fields were duller;
Or it may be that the envious spring,
Abash'd at the sight of a fairer thing,
Wax'd somewhat sadder of colouring
Because of her faultless colour).

With her through the Lyonesse I rode,
Till the woods with the noontide fervour glow'd,
And there for a space we halted,
Where the intertwining branches made
Cool carpets of olive tinted shade,
And the floors with fretwork of flame inlaid
From leafy lattices vaulted.

And scarf and mantle for her I spread,
And strewed them over the grassiest bed
And under the greenest awning,
And loosen'd latch and buckle, and freed
From selle and housing the red roan steed,
And the jennet of swift Iberian breed,
That had carried us since the dawning

RHYME OF JOYOUS GUARD

The brown thrush sang through the briar and
bower,
All flush'd or frosted with forest flower
In the warm sun's wanton glances;
And I grew deaf to the song-bird—blind
To blossom that sweeten'd the sweet spring
wind—
I saw her only—a girl reclined
In her girlhood's indolent trances.

And the song and the scent and sense wax'd
weak,
The wild rose withered beside the cheek
She poised on her fingers slender,
The soft spun gold of her glittering hair
Ran rippling into a wondrous snare,
That flooded the round arm bright and bare
And the shoulder's silvery splendour.

The deep dusk fires in those dreamy eyes,
Like seas clear-coloured in summer skies,
Were guiltless of future treason;
And I stood watching her, still and mute,
Yet the evil seed in my soul found root,
And the sad plant throve, and the sinful fruit
Grew ripe in the shameful season.

Let the sin be mine as the shame was hers,
In desolate days of departed years
She had leisure for shame and sorrow—
There was light repentance and brief remorse,
When I rode against Saxon foes or Norse
With clang of harness and clatter of horse,
And little heed for the morrow.

And now she is dead, men tell me, and I,
In this living death must I linger and lie
Till my cup to the dregs is drunken?
I looked through the lattice, worn and grim,
With eyelids darken'd and eyesight dim,
And weary body and wasted limb,
And sinew slacken'd and shrunken.

She is dead! Gone down to the burial-place
Where the grave-dews cleave to her faultless face;
Where the grave-sods crumble around her;
And that bright burden of burnish'd gold
That once on those waxen shoulders roll'd,

Will it spoil with the damps of the deadly
mould?
Was it shorn when the church vows
bound her?

Now I know full well that the fair spear shaft
Shall never gladden my hand, nor the haft
Of the good sword grow to my fingers;
Now the maddest fray, the merriest din
Would fail to quicken this life stream thin,
Yet the sleepy poison of that sweet sin
In the sluggish current still lingers.

Would God I had slept with the slain men,
long
Or ever the heart conceiv'd a wrong
That the innermost soul abhorréd—
Or ever these lying lips were strained
To her lids, pearl tinted and purple vein'd,
Or ever those traitorous kisses stained
The snows of her spotless forehead.

Let me gather a little strength to think,
As one who reels on the outermost brink,
To the innermost gulf descending.

In that truce, the longest and last of all,
In the summer nights of that festival—
Soft vesture of samite and silken pall—
The beginning came of the ending.

And one trod softly with sandall'd feet—
Ah! why are the stolen waters sweet?—
And one crept stealthily after;
I would I had taken him there and wrung
His knavish neck when the dark door swung,
Or torn by the roots his treacherous tongue,
And stifled his hateful laughter.

So the smouldering scandal blazed—but he,
My king, to the last put trust in me—
Aye, well, was his trust requited?
Now, priests may patter, and bells may toll,
He will need no masses to aid his soul;
When the angels open the judgment scroll,
His wrong will be tenfold righted.

Then dawn'd the day when the mail was donn'd,
And the steed for the strife caparison'd,
But not 'gainst the Norse invader.

Then was bloodshed—not by untoward
chance,
As the blood that is drawn with the jouster's
lance,
The fray in the castle of Melegrance,
The fight in the lists with Mador.

Then the guilt made manifest, then the siege,
When the true men rallying round the liege
Beleaguer'd his base betrayer,
Then the fruitless parleys, the pleadings vain,
And the hard-fought battles with brave
Gawaine,
Twice worsted, and once so nearly slain,
I may well be counted his slayer.

Then the crime of Modred—a little sin
At the side of mine, though the knave was kin
To the king by the knave's hand
stricken.
And the once loved knight, was he there to save
That knightly king who that knighthood gave?
Ah, Christ! will he greet me as knight or
knave
In the day when the dust shall quicken?

Had he lightly loved, had he trusted less,
I had sinn'd perchance with the sinfulness
That through prayer and penance is pardon'd.
Oh, love most loyal! Oh, faith most sure!
In the purity of a soul so pure
I found my safeguard—I sinn'd secure,
Till my heart to the sin grew harden'd.

We were glad together in gladsome meads,
When they shook to the strokes of our snorting steeds.
We were joyful in joyous lustre
When it flush'd the coppice or fill'd the glade,
Where the horn of the Dane or the Saxon bray'd,
And we saw the heathen banner display'd,
And the heathen lances cluster.

Then a steel-shod rush and a steel-clad ring,
And a crash of the spear staves splintering,
And the billowy battle blended.
Riot of chargers, revel of blows,
And fierce flush'd faces of fighting foes,
From croup to bridle, that reel'd and rose,
In a sparkle of sword-play splendid.

THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GUARD

With her through the Lyonesse I rode,
Till the woods with the noontide fervour glow
And there for a space we halted,
Where the intertwining branches made
Cool carpets of olive tinted shade,
And the floors with fretwork of flame inla
From leafy lattices vaulted.

And the long, lithe sword in the hand became
As a leaping light, as a falling flame,
As a fire through the flax that hasted;
Slender, and shining, and beautiful,
How it shore through shivering casque and skull,
And never a stroke was void and null,
And never a thrust was wasted.

I have done for ever with all these things—
Deeds that were joyous to knights and kings,
In days that with songs were cherish'd.
The songs are ended, the deeds are done,
There shall none of them gladden me now, not one;
There is nothing good for me under the sun,
But to perish as these things perish'd.

Shall it profit me aught that the Bishop seeks
My presence daily, and duly speaks
Soft words of comfort and kindness?
Shall it aught avail me? "Certes," he said,
"Though thy soul is darken'd, be not afraid—
God hateth nothing that He hath made—
His light shall disperse thy blindness."

I am not afraid for myself, although
I know I have had that light, and I know
The greater my condemnation.
When I well-nigh swoon'd in the deep drawn bliss
Of that first long, sweet, slow, stolen kiss,
I would gladly have given for less than this
Myself, with my soul's salvation.

I would languish thus in some loathsome den,
As a thing of naught in the eyes of men,
In the mouths of men as a by-word.
Through years of pain, and when God saw fit,
Singing His praises my soul should flit
To the darkest depth of the nethermost pit,
If *hers* could be wafted skyward.

Lord Christ! have patience a little while,
I have sinn'd because I am utterly vile,
Having light, loving darkness rather.
And I pray Thee deal with me as Thou wilt,
Yet the blood of Thy foes I have freely spilt,
And, moreover, mine is the greater guilt
In the sight of Thee and Thy Father.

That saint, Thy servant, was counted dear
Whose sword in the garden grazed the ear
Of Thine enemy, Lord Redeemer!
Not thus on the shattering visor jarr'd
In this hand the iron of the hilt crossbarr'd,
When the blade was swallow'd up to the guard
Through the teeth of the strong blasphemer.

If ever I smote as a man should smite,
If I struck one stroke that seem'd good in Thy sight,
By Thy loving mercy prevailing,
Lord! let her stand in the light of Thy face,
Cloth'd with Thy love and crown'd with Thy grace,
When I gnash my teeth in the terrible place
That is filled with weeping and wailing.

Shall I comfort my soul on account of this?
In the world to come, whatsoever it is,
There is no more earthly ill-doing—
For the dusty darkness shall slay desire,

And the chaff may burn with unquenchable
fire,
But for green wild growth of thistle and briar,
At least there is no renewing.

And this grievous burden of life shall change
In the dim hereafter, dreamy and strange,
And sorrows and joys diurnal.
And partial blessings and perishing ills
Shall fade in the praise, or the pang that fills
The glory of God's eternal hills,
Or the gloom of His gulf eternal.

Yet if all things change to the glory of One
Who for all ill-doers gave His Own sweet Son,
To His goodness so shall He change ill,
When the world as a wither'd leaf shall be,
And the sky like a shrivell'd scroll shall flee,
And souls shall be summon'd from land and sea,
At the blast of His bright archangel.

THORA'S SONG

"ASHTAROTH"

We severed in Autumn early,
Ere the earth was torn by the plough;
The wheat and the oats and the barley
Are ripe for the harvest now.
We sunder'd one misty morning,
Ere the hills were dimm'd by the rain,
Through the flowers those hills adorning—
Thou comest not back again.

My heart is heavy and weary
With the weight of a weary soul;
The mid-day glare groweth dreary,
And dreary the midnight scroll.
The corn-stalks sigh for the sickle
'Neath the load of the golden grain;
I sigh for a mate more fickle—
Thou comest not back again.

The warm sun riseth and setteth,
The night bringeth moist'ning dew,
But the soul that longeth, forgetteth
The warmth and the moisture, too;

In the hot sun rising and setting
There is naught save feverish pain;
There are tears in the night-dews wetting—
Thou comest not back again.

Thy voice in mine ear still mingles
With the voices of whisp'ring trees,
Thy kiss on my cheek still tingles
At each kiss of the summer breeze;
While dreams of the past are thronging
For substance of shades in vain,
I am waiting, watching, longing—
Thou comest not back again.

Waiting and watching ever,
Longing and lingering yet,
Leaves rustle and corn-stalks quiver,
Winds murmur and waters fret;
No answer they bring, no greeting,
No speech, save that sad refrain,
No voice, save an echo repeating—
He cometh not back again.

THE THREE FRIENDS

FROM THE FRENCH

THE sword slew one in deadly strife;
  One perished by the bowl;
The third lies self-slain by the knife;
  For three the bells may toll—
I loved her better than my life,
  And better than my soul.

Aye, father! hast thou come at last?
  'Tis somewhat late to pray;
Life's crimson tides are ebbing fast,
  They drain my soul away;
Mine eyes with film are overcast,
  The lights are waning grey.

This curl from her bright head I shore,
  And this her hands gave mine;
See, one is stained with purple gore,
  And one with poison'd wine;
Give these to her when all is o'er
  —How serpent-like they twine!

We three were brethren in arms,
  And sworn companions we;

We held this motto, "Whoso harms
The one shall harm the three!"
Till, matchless for her subtle charms,
Beloved of each was she.

(These two were slain that I might kiss
Her sweet mouth. I did well;
I said, "There is no greater bliss
For those in heaven that dwell";
I lost her; then I said, "There is
No fiercer pang in hell!")

We have upheld each other's rights,
Shared purse, and borrow'd blade;
Have stricken side by side in fights;
And side by side have prayed
In churches. We were Christian knights,
And she a Christian maid.

We met at sunrise, he and I,
My comrade—'twas agreed
The steel our quarrel first should try,
The poison should succeed;
For two of three were doom'd to die,
And one was doom'd to bleed.

THE THREE FRIENDS

We buckled to the doubtful fray,
At first, with some remorse;
But he, who must be slain—or slay,
Soon strikes with vengeful force.
He fell; I left him where he lay,
Among the trampled gorse.

Did passion warp my heart and head
To madness? And, if so,
Can madness palliate bloodshed?—
It may be—I shall know
When God shall gather up the dead
From where the four winds blow.

We met at sunset, he and I—
My second comrade true;
Two cups with wine were brimming high,
And one was drugg'd—we knew
Not which, nor sought we to descry;
Our choice by lot we drew.

And there I sat with him to sup:
I heard him blithely speak
Of bygone days—the fatal cup
Forgotten seem'd—his cheek

Was ruddy : Father, raise me up,
My voice is waxing weak.

We drank ; his lips turned livid white,
His cheeks grew leaden ash ;
He reel'd—I heard his temples smite
The threshold with a crash !
And from his hand, in shivers bright,
I saw the goblet flash.

The morrow dawn'd with fragrance rare;
The May-breeze, from the west,
Just fann'd the sleepy olives, where
She heard and I confess'd ;
My hair entangled with her hair,
Her breast strained to my breast.

On the dread verge of endless gloom,
My soul recalls that hour ;
Skies languishing with balm of bloom,
And fields aflame with flower ;
And slow caresses that consume,
And kisses that devour.

Ah ! now with storm the day seems rife,
My dull ears catch the roll

Of thunder, and the far sea strife,
  On beach and bar and shoal—
I loved her better than my life,
  And better than my soul.

She fled! I cannot prove her guilt,
  Nor would I an I could;
See, life for life is fairly spilt!
  And blood is shed for blood,
Her white hands neither touch'd the hilt,
  Nor yet the potion brew'd.

Aye! turn me from the sickly south,
  Towards the gusty north;
The fruits of sin are dust and drouth,
  The end of crime is wrath—
The lips that press'd her rose-like mouth
  Are choked with blood-red froth.

Then dig the grave-pit deep and wide,
  Three graves thrown into one,
And lay three corpses side by side,
  And tell their tale to none;
But bring her back in all her pride,
  To see what she hath done.

A SONG OF AUTUMN

"WHERE shall we go for our garlands glad
At the falling of the year,
When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,
When the boughs are yellow and sere?
Where are the old ones that once we had,
And when are the new ones near?
What shall we do for our garlands glad
At the falling of the year?"

"Child! can I tell where the garlands go?
Can I say where the lost leaves veer
On the brown-burnt banks, when the wild winds blow,
When they drift through the dead-wood drear?
Girl! when the garlands of next year glow,
You may gather again, my dear—
But *I* go where the last year's lost leaves go
At the falling of the year."

ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

AS RELATED BY SERGEANT LEIGH ON THE NIGHT HE GOT HIS CAPTAINCY AT THE RESTORATION

I'll tell you a story: but pass the "jack,"
And let us make merry to-night, my men.
Aye, those were the days when my beard was black—
I like to remember them now and then—
Then Miles was living, and Cuthbert there
On his lip was never a sign of down.
But I carry about some braided hair
That has not yet changed from the glossy brown
That it show'd the day when I broke the heart
Of the bravest of destriers, "Britomarte."

Sir Hugh was slain (may his soul find grace)
In the fray that was neither lost nor won
At Edgehill—then to St Hubert's-chase
Lord Goring despatch'd a garrison—
But men and horses were ill to spare,
And ere long the soldiers were shifted fast.
As for me, I never was quarter'd there
Till Marston Moor had been lost; at last,

As luck would have it, alone, and late
In the night, I rode to the northern gate.

I thought, as I pass'd through the moonlit
park,
On the boyish days I used to spend
In the halls of the knight lying stiff and
stark—
Thought on his lady, my father's friend
(Mine, too, in spite of my sinister bar,
But with that my story has nought to do)—
She died the winter before the war—
Died giving birth to the baby Hugh.
He pass'd ere the green leaves clothed the
bough,
And the orphan girl was the heiress now.

When I was a rude and a reckless boy,
And she a brave and a beautiful child,
I was her page, her playmate, her toy—
I have crown'd her hair with the field-flowers
wild,
Cowslip and crowfoot, and coltsfoot bright—
I have carried her miles when the woods
were wet,

I have read her romances of dame and
knight—
She was my princess, my pride, my pet.
There was then this proverb us twain between,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

She had grown to a maiden wonderful fair,
But for years I had scarcely seen her face.
Now, with troopers Holdsworth, Huntly and
Clare,
Old Miles kept guard at St. Hubert's-chase,
And the chatelaine was a Mistress Ruth,
Sir Hugh's half-sister, an ancient dame,
But a mettlesome soul had she forsooth,
As she show'd when the time of her trial
came.
I bore despatches to Miles and to her,
To warn them against the bands of Kerr.

And mine would have been a perilous ride
With the rebel horsemen—we knew not
where
They were scatter'd over that country side,—
If it had not been for my brave brown
mare—

She was iron-sinew'd and satin-skinn'd,
Ribb'd like a drum and limb'd like a deer,
Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind—
There was nothing she couldn't climb or clear—
Rich lords had vex'd me, in vain, to part,
For their gold and silver, with Britomarte.

Next morn we muster'd scarce half a score
With the serving men, who were poorly arm'd—
Five soldiers, counting myself, no more,
And a culverin, which might well have harm'd
Us, had we used it, but not our foes,
When, with horses and foot, to our doors they came,
And a psalm-singer summon'd us (through his nose),
And deliver'd—"This, in the people's name,
Unto whoso holdeth this fortress here,
Surrender! or bide the siege—John Kerr."

'Twas a mansion built in a style too new,
A castle by courtesy, he lied

THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

But she a cart-l by inches the oaken boards,
And she cleared the yards beyond the fyke.

Who called it a fortress—yet 'tis true,
It had been indifferently fortified—
We were well provided with bolt and bar—
And while I hurried to place our men,
Old Miles was call'd to a council of war,
With Mistress Ruth and with *her*, and
when
They had argued loudly and long, those three,
They sent, as a last resource, for me.

In the chair of state sat erect Dame Ruth;
She had cast aside her embroidery:
She had been a beauty, they say, in her youth,
There was much fierce fire in her bold black
eye.
"Am I deceived in you both?" quoth she.
"If one spark of her father's spirit lives
In this girl here—so, this Leigh, Ralph Leigh,
Let us hear what counsel the springald
gives."
Then I stammer'd, somewhat taken aback—
(Simon, you ale-swiller, pass the "jack").

The dame wax'd hotter—"Speak out, lad, say
Must we fall in that canting caitiff's power?

Shall we yield to a knave and a turncoat? Nay,
I had liever leap from our topmost tower.
For a while we can surely await relief:
Our walls are high and our doors are strong."
This Kerr was indeed a canting thief—
I know not rightly, some private wrong
He had done Sir Hugh, but I know this much,
Traitor or turncoat, he suffer'd as such.

Quoth Miles—"Enough! your will shall be done;
Relief may arrive by the merest chance,
But your house ere dusk will be lost and won;
They have got three pieces of ordnance."
Then I cried, "Lord Guy, with four troops of horse,
Even now is biding at Westbrooke town;
If a rider could break through the rebel force,
He would bring relief ere the sun goes down;
Through the postern door could I make one dart,
I could baffle them all upon Britomarte."

Miles mutter'd "Madness!" Dame Ruth
look'd grave,
Said "True, though we cannot keep one
hour
The courtyard, no, nor the stables, save
They will have to batter piecemeal the
tower,
And thus——" But suddenly she halted
there.
With a shining hand on my shoulder laid,
Stood Gwendoline. She had left her chair,
And, "Nay, if it needs must be done," she
said,
"Ralph Leigh will gladly do it, I ween,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline."

I had undertaken a heavier task
For a lighter word. I saddled with care,
Nor cumber'd myself with corselet nor casque
(Being loth to burden the brave brown
mare).
Young Clare kept watch on the wall—he
cried,
"Now, haste, Ralph! this is the time to
seize,

The rebels are round us on every side,
But here they straggle by twos and threes."
Then out I led her, and up I sprung,
And the postern door on its hinges swung.

I had drawn this sword—you may draw it and feel,
For this is the blade that I bore that day—
There's a notch even now on the long grey steel,
A nick that has never been rasp'd away.
I bow'd my head and I buried my spurs,
One bound brought the gliding green beneath;
I could tell by her back-flung flatten'd ears
She had fairly taken the bit in her teeth—
(What, Jack, have you drain'd your namesake dry,
Left nothing to quench the thirst of a fly?)

These things are done, and are done with, lad,
In far less time than your talker tells.
The sward with their hoof strokes shook like mad,
And rang with their carbines and petronels,

And they shouted, "Cross him and cut him off,"
"Surround him," "Seize him," "Capture
the clown
Or kill him," "Shall he escape to scoff
In your faces?" "Shoot him or cut him
down."
And their bullets whistled on every side:
Many were near us and more were wide.

Not a bullet told upon Britomarte—
Suddenly snorting, she launched along—
So the osprey dives where the seagulls dart,
So the falcon swoops where the kestrels
throng;
And full in my front one pistol flash'd,
And right in my path their sergeant got.
How our jack boots jarr'd, how our stirrups
clash'd,
While the mare like a meteor past him shot;
But I clove his skull with a backstroke clean,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

And as one whom the fierce wind storms in
the face
With spikes of hail and with splinters of rain,

I, while we fled through St. Hubert's-chase,
Bent till my cheek was amongst her mane.
To the north full a league of the deer-park lay,
Smooth, springy turf, and she fairly flew,
And the sound of their hoof strokes died away,
And their far shots faint in the distance grew.
Loudly I laugh'd, having won the start,
At the folly of following Britomarte.

They had posted a guard at the northern gate—
Some dozen of pikemen and musketeers.
To the tall park palings I turned her straight,
She veer'd in her flight as the swallow veers—
And some blew matches and some drew swords,
And one of them wildly hurl'd his pike,
But she clear'd by inches the oaken boards,
And she carried me yards beyond the dyke,
Then gaily over the long green down
We gallop'd, heading for Westbrooke town.

The green down slopes to the great grey moor,
The grey moor sinks to the gleaming Skelt—
Sudden and sullen, and swift and sure,
The whirling water was round my belt—

She breasted the bank with a savage snort
And a backward glance of her bloodshot eye,
And "Our Lady of Andover's" flash'd like thought,
And flitted St Agatha's nunnery,
And the firs at The Ferngrove fled on the right,
And "Falconer's tower" on the left took flight.

And over "The Ravenswold" we raced—
We rounded the hill by "The Hermit's Well"—
We burst on the Westbrooke Bridge—"What haste?
What errand?" shouted the sentinel.
"To Beelzebub with the Brewer's knave,"
"*Carolus Rex* and he of the Rhine,"
Galloping past him, I got and gave
In the gallop password and countersign,
All soak'd with water and soil'd with mud,
With the sleeve of my jerkin half drench'd in blood.

Now, Heaven be praised that I found him there—
Lord Guy. He said, having heard my tale,

"Leigh, let my own man look to your mare,
Rest and recruit with our wine and ale;
But first must our surgeon attend to you;
You are somewhat shrewdly stricken no doubt."
Then he snatch'd a horn from the wall and blew,
Making "boot and saddle" ring sharply out.
"Have I done good service this day?" quoth I.
"Then I will ride back in your troop, Lord Guy."

In the street I heard how the trumpets peal'd,
And I caught the gleam of a morion
From the window—then to the door I reel'd;
I had lost more blood than I reckon'd upon;
He eyed me calmly with keen grey eyes—
Stern grey eyes of a steel blue grey—
Said, "The wilful man can never be wise.
Nathless the wilful must have his way,"
And he pour'd from a flagon some fiery wine,
I drain'd it, and straightway strength was mine.

. . . . .

I was with them all the way on the brown—
"Guy to the rescue!" "God and the king!"
We were just in time, for the doors were down,
And didn't our sword blades rasp and ring!
And didn't we hew, and didn't we hack!
The sport scarce lasted us minutes ten—
(Aye, those were the days when my beard was black:
I like to remember them now and then).
Though they fought like fiends, we were four to one,
And we captured those that refused to run.

We have not forgotten it, Cuthbert, boy!
That supper scene when the lamps were lit;
How the women (some of them) sobb'd for joy,
How the soldiers drank the deeper for it;
How the Dame did honours, and Gwendoline,
How grandly she glided into the hall,
How she stoop'd with the grace of a girlish queen
And kiss'd me gravely before them all,
And the stern Lord Guy, how gaily he laugh'd,
Till more of his cup was spilt than quaff'd.

Brown Britomarte lay dead in her straw
Next morn—we buried her—brave old girl!
John Kerr, we tried him by martial law,
And we twisted some hemp for the traitor churl;
And she, I met her alone, said she,
"You have risk'd your life, you have lost your mare,
And what can I give in return, Ralph Leigh?"
I replied, "One braid of that bright brown hair."
And with that she bow'd her beautiful head,
"You can take as much as you choose," she said.

And I took, it may be, more than enough—
And I shore it rudely, close to the roots.
The wine or wounds may have made me rough,
And men at the bottom are merely brutes.
Three weeks I slept at St Hubert's-chase.
When I woke from the fever of wounds and wine
I could scarce believe that the ghastly face
That the glass reflected was really mine.
I sought the hall—where a wedding *had been*—
The wedding of Guy and of Gwendoline.

ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

The romance of a grizzled old trooper's life
May make you laugh in your sleeves : laugh out,
Lads ; we have most of us seen some strife ;
We have all of us had some sport, no doubt.
I have won some honour and gain'd some gold,
Now that our king returns to his own ;
If the pulses beat slow, if the blood runs cold,
And if friends have faded and loves have flown,
Then the greater reason is ours to drink,
And the more we swallow the less we shall think.

At the battle of Naseby, Miles was slain,
And Huntly sank from his wounds that week ;
We left young Clare upon Worcester plain—
How the "Ironside" gash'd his girlish cheek!
Aye, strut, and swagger, and ruffle anew,
Gay gallants, now that the war is done!
They fought like fiends (give the fiend his due)—
We fought like fops, it was thus they won.
Holdsworth is living for aught I know,
At least he was living two years ago.

And Guy—Lord Guy—so stately and stern,
  He is changed, I met him at Winchester;
He has grown quite gloomy and taciturn.
  Gwendoline—why do you ask for her?
Died! as her mother had died before—
  Died giving birth to the baby Guy!
Did my voice shake? Then am I fool the more.
  Sooner or later we all must die:
But at least, let us live while we live to-night.
The *days* may be dark, but the *lamps* are bright.

For to me the sunlight seems worn and wan:
  The sun, he is losing his splendour now—
He can never shine as of old he shone
  On her glorious hair and glittering brow.
Ah! those *days that were*, when my beard
      was black,
  Now I have only the *nights that are*.
What, landlord, ho! bring in haste, burnt sack
  And a flask of your fiercest usquebaugh.
You, Cuthbert! surely you know by heart
The story of *her* and of Britomarte.

LAUDAMUS

The Lord shall slay or the Lord shall save!
He is righteous whether He save or slay—
Brother! give thanks for the gifts He gave,
Though the gifts He gave He hath taken away—
Shall we strive for that which is nothing?
Nay.
Shall we hate each other for that which fled?
She is but a marvel of modell'd clay,
And the smooth, clear white, and the soft, pure red
That we coveted, shall endure no day.

Was it wise or well that I hated you
For the fruit that hung too high on the tree?—
For the blossom out of our reach that grew
Was it well or wise that you hated me?—
My hate has flown, and your hate shall flee.
Let us veil our faces like children chid—
Can that violet orb we swore by see
Through that violet-vein'd, transparent lid?—
Now the Lord forbid that this strife should be.

Would you knit the forehead or clench the fist,
For the curls that never were well caress'd—
For the red that never was fairly kiss'd—
For the white that never was fondly press'd—
Shall we nourish wrath while she lies at rest
Between us? Surely our wrath shall cease—
We would fain know better—the Lord knows best—
Is there peace between us? Yea, there is peace,
In the soul's release she at least is blest.

Let us thank the Lord for His bounties all,
For the brave old days of pleasure and pain,
When the world for both of us seem'd too small—
Though the love was void and the hate was vain—
Though the word was bitter between us twain,
And the bitter word was kin to the blow,
For her gloss and ripple of rich gold rain,
For her velvet crimson and satin snow—
Though we never shall know the old days again.

LAUDAMUS

The Lord!—His mercy is great, men say;
His wrath, men say, is a burning brand—
Let us praise Him, whether He save or slay,
And above her body let hand join hand.
We shall meet, my friends, in the spirit land—
Will our strife renew? Nay, I dare not trust,
For the grim, great gulf that cannot be spann'd
Will divide us from her. The Lord is just,
She shall not be thrust where our spirits stand.